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ABSTRACT

The serialized reference work "Biography Today" is initiating a "Subject Series" that in five separate volumes will encompass: authors, artists, scientists, and inventors, sports figures, and world leaders. This is the first volume in the "Author Series." There will be no duplication between the regular series and the special subject volumes. This volume contains 19 biographical sketches. Each entry provides at least one photograph of the individual profiled, with bold-faced rubrics informing the reader on the author's birth, youth, early memories, education, first jobs, marriage and family, career highlights, memorable experiences, hobbies, and honors and awards. Obituary entries also are included, written to provide a perspective on the individual's entire career. U.S. authors in this volume include: (1) Eric Carle; (2) Alice Childress; (3) Robert Cormier; (4) Jim Davis; (5) John Grisham; (6) Virginia Hamilton; (7) S. E. Hinton; (8) M. E. Kerr; (9) Stephen King; (10) Gary Larson; (11) Joan Lowery Nixon; (12) Gary Paulsen; (13) Cynthia Rylant; (14) Mildred D. Taylor; (15) Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.; (16) E. B. White; and (17) Paul Zindel. British authors included are Roald Dahl and James Herriot. (EH)

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ED 390 725

Vol. 1
1995

Biography Today

Profiles of People of Interest to Young Readers

Author Series

Featured in this issue . . .

Eric Carle
Alice Childress
Roald Dahl
Jim Davis
John Grisham
James Herriot
S.E. Hinton
Stephen King
Gary Larson
Joan Lowery Nixon
Gary Paulsen
Cynthia Rylant
Mildred D. Taylor
Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.
E.B. White
Paul Zindel

M.E. Kerr

Robert Cormier

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Biography Today

Profiles of People of Interest to Young Readers

Author Series

Vol. 1
1995

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Executive Editor
Biography Today Series

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Detroit, Michigan 48226

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Preface

Welcome to the first volume of the new **Biography Today Subject Series**. We are publishing this new series in response to the growing number of suggestions from our readers, who want more coverage of more people in *Biography Today*. Five new volumes, covering **Authors, Artists, Scientists and Inventors, Sports Figures, and World Leaders,** will be appearing in 1995. Each of these hardcover volumes will be 200 pages in length and cover approximately 20 individuals of interest to readers aged 9 and above. The length and format of the entries will be like those found in the regular issues of *Biography Today*, but there will be **no** duplication between the regular series and the special subject volumes.

The Plan of the Work

As with the regular issues of *Biography Today*, this special subject volume on **Authors** was especially created to appeal to young readers in a format they can enjoy reading and readily understand. Each volume contains alphabetically arranged sketches. Each entry provides at least one picture of the individual profiled, and bold-faced rubrics lead the reader to information on birth, youth, early memories, education, first jobs, marriage and family, career highlights, memorable experiences, hobbies, and honors and awards. Each of the entries ends with a list of easily accessible sources designed to lead the student to further reading on the individual and a current address. Obituary entries are also included, written to provide a perspective on the individual's entire career. Obituaries are clearly marked in both the table of contents and at the beginning of the entry.

Biographies are prepared by Omni editors after extensive research, utilizing the most current materials available. Those sources that are generally available to students appear in the list of further reading at the end of the sketch.

Indexes

To provide easy access to entries, each issue of the regular *Biography Today* series and each volume of the Special Subject Series contains a Name Index, General Index covering occupations, organizations, and ethnic and minority origins, Places of Birth Index, and a Birthday Index. These indexes cumulate with each succeeding volume or issue. Each of the Special Subject Volumes will be indexed as part of these cumulative indexes, so that readers can locate information on all individuals covered in either the regular or the special volumes.

Our Advisors

This new member of the *Biography Today* family of publications was reviewed by an Advisory Board comprised of librarians, children's literature

specialists, and reading instructors so that we could make sure that the concept of this publication—to provide a readable and accessible biographical magazine for young readers—was on target. They evaluated the title as it developed, and their suggestions have proved invaluable. Any errors, however, are ours alone. We'd like to list the Advisory Board members, and to thank them for their efforts.

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Ethel Stoloff	Librarian, Birney Middle School, Retired Southfield, MI

Our Advisory Board stressed to us that we should not shy away from controversial or unconventional people in our profiles, and we have tried to follow their advice. The Advisory Board also mentioned that the sketches might be useful in reluctant reader and adult literacy programs, and we would value any comments librarians might have about the suitability of our magazine for those purposes.

Your Comments Are Welcome

Our goal is to be accurate and up-to-date, to give young readers information they can learn from and enjoy. Now we want to know what you think. Take a look at this issue of *Biography Today Author Series*, on approval. Write or call me with your comments. We want to provide an excellent source of biographical information for young people. Let us know how you think we're doing.

And here's a special incentive: review our list of people to appear in upcoming issues. Use the bind-in card to list other people you want to see in *Biography Today*. If we include someone you suggest, your library wins a free issue, with our thanks. Please see the bind-in card for details.

Laurie Harris
Executive Editor, *Biography Today*

Eric Carle 1929-
American Children's Author and Illustrator
Creator of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*

BIRTH

Eric Carle was born June 25, 1929, in Syracuse, New York, to Erich and Johanna Carle. The Carles moved to the U.S. from Germany before their only son was born. Eric has one sister, Christa, who is 21 years younger. While they lived in New York, Eric's father worked in a washing machine factory and his mother was a homemaker.

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EARLY MEMORIES

Eric Carle cherishes the memories of his early years in Syracuse, especially the time he spent with his dad. "I had a wonderful father. He loved nature. He would take me for long walks. He explained the lives of the salamander, the worms and beetles and bees."

Carle also remembers his first year of school with great fondness. He had a terrific kindergarten teacher, who provided a warm, encouraging environment for her young students. He recalls "large sheets of paper, the sun streaming in. I don't remember my teacher but she must have been a wonderful teacher. She called my parents to tell them I was talented and they should nurture this."

LIVING IN GERMANY

But all that was to change. Eric's mother was homesick for Germany, so the family left the U.S. in 1935, when Eric was six. They settled in Stuttgart, where they shared a large house, divided into flats, with grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

When fall came, Eric entered first grade. He had quickly forgotten his English and spoke only German. The atmosphere of his German school was startlingly different from his American kindergarten. The sunny, nurturing surroundings were replaced with a gloomy, cruel place. Three days into first grade, he experienced "an old German tradition: corporal punishment." For what he remembered as a "minor infraction," he was struck on the hand so hard that large, red welts formed. He was furious and humiliated. At home that night, he begged his mother to write a letter to his new teacher. "Tell him," said six-year-old Eric, "that your son is not suited for an education." His mother wrote a note to the teacher, the contents of which were never revealed to Eric, but which did nothing to change the teacher's cruel, authoritative manner. Carle says that "only one thing was left to me, and I did it for the next ten years: I hated school!"

He begged his parents to return to the United States, and he dreamed of building a bridge between Stuttgart and Syracuse. He was delighted when summer came, for it meant he was free to visit on the neighboring farms of relatives, and to delight in the farm animals and the open spaces.

But life was to change again for Eric, and for many people in the world.

WORLD WAR II

Before the Carles returned to their native country, their relatives had painted a rosy picture of life in Germany. They spoke of a new leader, Adolf Hitler, who "had eliminated unemployment, inflation, and hunger," as Carle remembers. The truth was startlingly different. One morning as

he passed by a familiar department store in town, he found merchandise strewn across the sidewalk, the glass windows shattered, and a Star of David painted on the door. It was the mark of "Kristallnacht," a night when Hitler's thugs set upon Jewish shopkeepers all over Germany, destroying their stores in a blatant display of anti-Semitism.

In September 1939, Germany invaded Poland. World War II had begun. Eric's beloved father was drafted that day; he did not return home for eight years. Stuttgart was a major target for Allied air attacks during the war. Carle remembers air raid sirens at night and running to the family's "stollen," or tunnels, which they had dug into the hills to provide shelter from the bombs.

In 1943, when he was 14, Carle and his classmates were sent away from Stuttgart for their safety. He lived with a family in southwestern Germany for a little over a year, then was evacuated again. This time he was sent close to the battle front, where he dug trenches with other boys his age, as well as Russian and Italian prisoners and Polish slave workers. Once, his group was sprayed with gunfire and Eric was wounded. After a brief hospitalization, he was sent home. Within weeks, a German soldier visited his mother and told her that Eric was to be drafted into the army. His mother was polite to the soldier, but she refused to let Eric go. Some of the 14- and 15-year-old boys from his town who did go to the front were frightened and fled in the face of the enemy. Their Nazi superiors hung the boys for deserting.

In the spring of 1945, Germany surrendered. Like many German families, the Carles had lost fathers, sons, and other family members during the war. At the end of the war, Eric's father was declared missing. Finally, in 1947, word arrived that he was alive and was being held as a prisoner of war in Russia. The family rejoiced and longed for his return. When he did finally get home in 1947, he weighed 80 pounds; he was a broken man. In Carle's word he "would never really recover or 'belong' to our family again."

Eric was lucky enough to find a job with the U.S. occupation forces in Germany. He worked in their headquarters, and after years of deprivation, Eric feasted on "peanut butter sandwiches, lumps of butter, cubes of sugar, leftover bits of steak, and desserts." What he couldn't eat he stuffed into his pockets for his family. He remembers they "awaited my return each evening with hungry eyes."

EDUCATION

Nearly half of Stuttgart had been reduced to rubble in the war, and Eric's school had also been damaged. After the school was repaired and Eric returned to regular classes, he found he still hated school. Art was the

only course he enjoyed. Encouraged by a teacher, he entered the Academy of Commercial Arts in Stuttgart. After graduating from the Academy in 1950, Carle began to work as an art director for a fashion magazine. In 1952, he decided he wanted to return to the U.S. to live and work.

FIRST JOBS

Carle arrived in New York in the spring of 1952. Someone had told him to check out the New York Art Director's Show, where he saw the work of a young art director for *Fortune* magazine, Leo Lionni. Lionni, who went on to become a famous children's author himself, was friendly and helpful to Carle when he called him to ask for an interview. Lionni helped Carle find his first job, as an art director for the *New York Times*. Within five months, Carle was drafted into the U.S. armed services. Since he had been born a U.S. citizen, he had to fulfill his term of service in the army, even though he had spent most of his life in another country. He was sent to basic training, and because of his German speaking skills, back to Germany.

By a happy twist of fate, Carle was stationed in Stuttgart and was even allowed to stay at the home of his parents. While in Germany, Carle met and married his first wife, Dorothea Wohlenberg, and the couple had their first child, Rolf. When his term of service was completed two years later, Carle returned to the U.S., with his wife and infant son. He went back to his job at the *Times*, then moved on to an advertising agency, where he also worked as an art director. But Carle didn't like advertising. He eventually quit the job and worked as a freelance artist. "I had come to the conclusion," he said of his years as an ad man, "that I didn't want to sit in meetings, write memos, entertain clients, and catch commuter trains. I simply wanted to create pictures."

CHOOSING A CAREER

"I slithered into this," says Carle of his entry into the world of writing for children. "I would have failed if I had deliberately tried to get into children's books." Instead, his new career found him.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

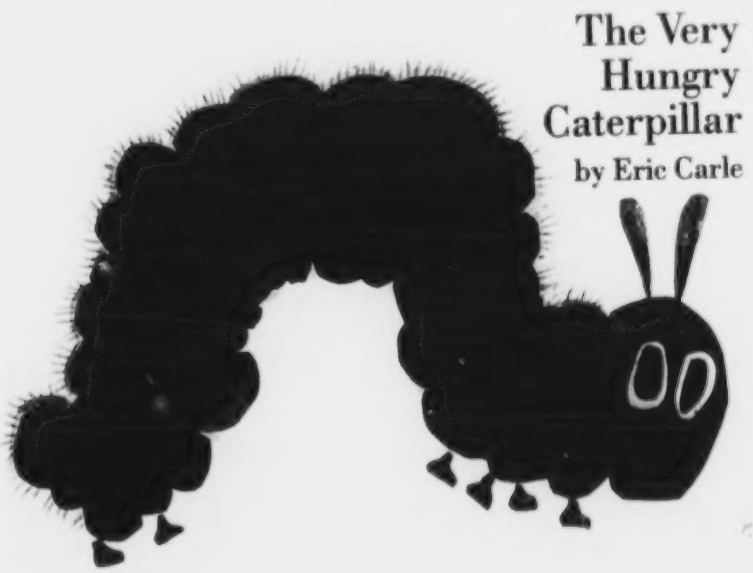
Around this time, Bill Martin, Jr. contacted Carle. He had seen some of Carle's commercial art work, particularly a drawing of a lobster, and liked it. He asked Carle to illustrate a book he had written, *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* The collaboration was a great success. The book, published in 1967, is a classic of children's literature, and just passed its 25th anniversary. Pleased with his success in his new field, Carle began to work on a book of his own, *1,2,3 to the Zoo*, which was published in 1968. Next, he created the book for which he is world-famous, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (1969).

THE VERY HUNGRY CATERPILLAR

The Very Hungry Caterpillar has an interesting history. One day Carle was fooling around with a hole puncher. "I looked at the holes I had punched in the paper and I thought 'bookworm'," says Carle. He called his editor with the idea. She didn't like it. "How about a caterpillar?" she suggested. "Butterfly!" thought Carle. This one little book—it is only 14 pages long, and measures five inches by three-and-a half inches—is adored by children the world over. *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* tells the story of a creature who is transformed from a little egg to a caterpillar, and who eats his way through all kinds of different foods—an apple, two pears, three plums, as well as a salami, a cupcake, and a lollipop—on his way to becoming a beautiful butterfly. As he eats, he leaves a series of holes on each page.

The Very Hungry Caterpillar has sold over 10 million copies to date. The phenomenal success of the book has been a wonder to Carle, and he has spoken of what he considers to be its central appeal. "I think the key to a successful book is the emotion the author puts into it," he says. "There's a message of hope for children who read *The Hungry Caterpillar* and see how a little, ugly caterpillar turns into a beautiful butterfly. It's the ugly duckling story."

Carle has created many other books for children, all with his distinctive artistic style, and many featuring insects—spiders, crickets, and



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ladybugs—whose stories are told with simplicity and warmth. In such works as *The Grouchy Ladybug* (1977), *The Very Busy Spider* (1984), and *The Very Quiet Cricket* (1990), Carle continues to delight his young audience.

He works in a format called collage. To make his signature colorful illustrations, he begins with a large piece of tissue paper, which he paints. Then he imprints a pattern on the paper, using all kinds of different things—he has used sponges, cloth, carpet, even his own foot. He calls collage a medium that allows him to create "big, bold, defined spaces." And his style is not intimidating to kids. "I've had children come to me and say, 'I can do that,' and I'm highly complimented," says the author/illustrator. "Both the content and the art in my books reflect the child in me—with the help of the grownup."

These beautifully crafted books are not simplistic. "My books are not simple," Carle claims. "I devote my entire life to them, and I don't do anything else." Carle's books are the result of months of long, hard work. He says that he starts with 2,000 words, which he whittles down to 20. The illustrations are for him the easy part; he finds the words to be much more difficult. And despite his occasional collaborations, he prefers to be both author and illustrator. "The pictures need words, and the words need pictures, and you can't separate them," he says.

Carle's special interest is the time in a child's life when he or she leaves the sheltered world of home and goes to school for the first time. He thinks of his books as objects that help to ease that transition. He has called his works, "half toy, half book." "At home you have toys, which you can touch," he explains. "At school you sit in a chair with books and are supposed to learn. These are a transition, a book to touch and a toy to read."

His many young fans write him letters and send him little caterpillars—stuffed, as magnets, paperweights, and in needlepoint—to let him know how much his work means to them. Many first-grade teachers could attest to the fact that *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* is the first book many children learn to read. And Carle's readers like to create their own versions of the story. One child who met Carle recently presented him with a copy of *The Very Hungry Leonora*. He loved it.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Carle has been married twice. His first marriage, to Dorothea Wohlenberg, ended in divorce. He has two grown children, Rolf and Cirsten, from that marriage. In 1973, he married Barbara Morrison, who is a teacher. They live in Northampton, Massachusetts, and Carle has a studio in a three-story building just blocks away from their home.

SELECTED WRITINGS

AS AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

1,2,3 to the Zoo, 1968
The Very Hungry Caterpillar, 1969
Pancakes, Pancakes, 1970
The Tiny Seed, 1970
Do You Want to Be My Friend? 1971
The Rooster Who Set Out to See the World, 1972
Have You Seen My Cat? 1973
The Mixed-Up Chameleon, 1975
The Grouchy Ladybug, 1977
The Very Busy Spider, 1984
Papa, Please Get the Moon for Me, 1986
Animals, Animals, 1989
The Very Quiet Cricket, 1990
Dragons, Dragons, 1991
My Apron, 1994
The Very Lonely Firefly, 1995

AS ILLUSTRATOR

Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? 1967 [written by Bill Martin, Jr.]
The Mountain That Loved a Bird, 1985 [written by Alice McLerran]
Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear? 1991 [written by Bill Martin, Jr.]

HONORS AND AWARDS

Ten Best Picture Books of the Year (*New York Times*): 1969, for *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*
International Children's Book Fair: First Prize, 1970, for *1,2,3 to the Zoo*
Notable Book (American Library Association): 1972, for *Do You Want to Be My Friend?*
New York Times Outstanding Book of the Year: 1974, for "My Very First Library" Series
Best Books of the 80s (American Library Association): for *The Very Busy Spider*
Top Ten Pictures Books of the Year (*Redbook* magazine): 1989, for *Animals, Animals*; 1990, for *The Very Quiet Cricket*

FURTHER READING

BOOKS

Something about the Author Autobiography Series, Vol. 6
Twentieth-Century Children's Writers, 1989

PERIODICALS

Boston Globe, Jan. 1, 1989, p.C104
Chicago Tribune, July 11, 1990, p.C1
Detroit Free Press, Sep. 28, 1988, p.B3; Oct. 17, 1991, p.F1
New York Times, Apr. 17, 1994, p.J7
Publisher's Weekly, Sep. 29, 1989, p.28; Aug. 29, 1994, p.26

ADDRESS

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OBITUARY

Alice Childress 1920?-1994
American Playwright, Novelist, Actress, and Director
Author of *A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich*

BIRTH

Alice Childress (CHILL-dress) was born in Charleston, South Carolina, on October 12, 1920 (some sources give 1916). No details on her parents have been publicly divulged, even though much of her adult life has been recorded in chronicles of the theater and the publishing world. She moved to Harlem, in New York City,

at the age of five. She was raised there under the watchful eye of her grandmother, whose storytelling skills first awakened Alice's interest in acting and writing and, later, led to a remarkable career that would span a half-century.

YOUTH

Childress's childhood was spent among those whom she called the "intellectual poor," whom she celebrated in her 1973 play, *Wedding Band: A Love/Hate Story in Black and White*. Her neighborhood—118th Street between Lenox and Fifth Avenues—was one of the poorest blocks in Harlem. But it was inhabited, she said, by "The poor, genteel, and sensitive people who are seamstresses, coal-carriers, candy-makers, sharecroppers, bakers, baby care-takers, housewives, foot soldiers, penny candy sellers, vegetable peelers, who are somehow able to sustain within themselves the poet's heart, sensitivity, and appreciation of pure emotion, the ability to freely spend tears and laughter without saving them up for a rainy day." She often spoke admiringly of the warmth and support of her neighbors, and how these needy people, her grandmother and friends, faced the problems and responsibilities of daily life. Childress recalled, too, that illegal activities like prostitution and gambling went on around her, but that young children were shielded from the worst of these. "Heroin was not yet King of the Ghetto," she recalled, "and a boy would not dream of killing his grandmother or hurting his mamma or her friends in order to pour cooked opium dust through a hole in his arm."

EARLY MEMORIES

Some of the most touching memories of Childress's childhood were of death and funerals in the days when services were held at home instead of in funeral parlors. She told of a particular instance where she observed the grief and tears of a remorseful man who had spoken unkindly to his wife shortly before her death. Those gathered there expressed their sympathy, she remembers, "with healing words of comfort: 'Well, God knows you loved her, don't take it so hard, you did your best.' They brought him through that day. Other men, richer and smarter, had to go through years of therapy to find the reasons why and why and why . . . and to know there's always another why." Childress recounted this and other memories in a revealing 1987 book by Kathleen Betsko and Rachel Koenig, *Interviews With Contemporary Women Playwrights*.

EDUCATION

Childress attended Harlem public schools, including two years at Woodleigh High School (1934-1936), but had to drop out and fend for herself after her grandmother died. She knew that if she were to learn,

she would have to teach herself, so Childress discovered the public library, often reading as many as two books a day. She did not attend college.

FIRST JOBS

In the early days, while Childress was trying to establish herself as a writer and actress, she worked at numerous low-paying jobs—domestic worker, photo retoucher, assistant machinist, saleslady, and insurance agent, among them. These experiences later led to the development of themes on black life and the honest, discerning character portrayals of her writing.

CHOOSING A CAREER

By the time she reached her late teens, Childress had become fascinated with the stage. Her enthusiasm led her to be among the founders of Harlem's American Negro Theatre (ANT) in 1939. She performed there for 11 years, appearing in a variety of dramas, including John Silvera and Abram Hill's *On Strivers Row* in 1940, Theodore Browne's *Natural Man* in 1941, and Philip Yordan's *Anna Lucasta* in 1944. In addition to performing during the 1940s, Childress also studied under ANT instructors, directed for a year, and wrote *Florence*, the critically acclaimed one-act play about racial prejudice that launched her career as a playwright in 1949.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

A year after *Florence* brought her to the attention of theatre critics, Childress adapted the novel *Simple Speaks His Mind* by the celebrated poet Langston Hughes into a play, *Just a Little Simple*, which was produced at the Club Baron Theatre in Harlem. That play was followed by *Gold Through the Trees* in 1952, giving her "the distinction of being the first black woman to have a play professionally produced on the American stage," says *Notable Women in the American Theatre*. Childress wrote her first full-length play, *Trouble in Mind*, in 1955. This dramatization of a black woman's fight against overt and subtle discrimination opened at Greenwich Mews Theatre in New York to rave reviews. It went on to run for 91 performances, capturing the Obie Award for the best original play produced off-Broadway.

In 1962, Childress wrote *Wedding Band: A Love/Hate Story in Black and White*, a poignant story set in South Carolina during World War I of a forbidden interracial love affair. The subtle force of the play prompted *New York Times* reviewer Clive Barnes to note how "Childress very carefully suggests the stirrings of black consciousness, as well as the strength of white bigotry." Despite such praise, Childress was initially unable to find a New York theatre group willing to stage *Wedding Band* because of its controversial story line and unflinching realism. *Wedding Band* was first performed at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor in 1966 and then in Chicago, but it was not until 1972 that the play was produced in New York, at the

Shakespeare Festival. Later, when it was filmed for TV, many stations refused to show it.

By the 1960s, Childress was earning widespread recognition and respect as a serious dramatist. In spite of her lack of formal schooling, her self-directed studies became widely recognized. She often contributed to panel discussions and conferences in the company of such prominent black writers as James Baldwin and Langston Hughes. In 1965, Childress was featured on a BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) presentation on "The Negro in the American Theatre." She also lectured in colleges and universities. From 1966 to 1968, Childress was awarded an appointment by Harvard University as scholar-in-residence at the Radcliffe Institute for Independent Study (now the Mary Ingraham Bunting Institute) in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

She continued her prolific output throughout this period. One of her most important pieces was *Wine in the Wilderness* (1969). In this short play, she illustrated racial prejudice within the black community. This timely drama was first produced as part of a Boston television series called *On Being Black* and was later performed in schools and in local theatre settings. The play was controversial, though, and again many TV stations refused to carry it. In fact, *Wine in the Wilderness* was banned in the whole state of Alabama.

WRITING FOR YOUNGER READERS

In the 1970s, Childress's work began to take a somewhat different focus. She traveled extensively, observing theatre and culture in the former Soviet Union, China, and West Africa. She returned to writing, concentrating on plays and stories for young readers. In the mid 1970s, she completed two one-act plays for young people: *When the Rattlesnake Sounds* (1975), a serious young-adult piece that looks behind the scenes at Harriet Tubman's experiences on the Underground Railroad, and *Let's Hear It for the Queen* (1976), a light-hearted piece for younger readers that is a take-off on "The Queen of Hearts" nursery rhyme.

A HERO AIN'T NOTHIN' BUT A SANDWICH

But her greatest work for young readers is surely *A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich*. Childress was encouraged to write her first novel by the late Ferdinand Monjo, a noted author and editor, who suggested she turn her considerable skill to writing for young adults. In 1973, she published the powerful award-winning novel, *A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich*. This story is a study of Benjie, a 13-year-old black heroin user. Each of its chapters presents a monologue that shows the different characters' views of the boy's addiction.

Childress explained the book's unusual title as follows: "I was down in Greenwich Village [in New York City]. I saw a man who looked like he was done in by drugs, leaning against a plate-glass window of a restaurant. And he's weeping and about to go over. At the top of his head was a sign on the window that said 'A Hero.' Then he slid to the ground; the rest of the sign was revealed, that said 'Sandwich, $1.50.' And I said to my companion, 'We're living in a time when a hero ain't nothin' but a sandwich.' In my book, the boy [Benjie] says it as a flippant remark to his stepfather. Tells him he is nothing but a maintenance man. What I tell kids is that [Benjie] did not see his ruination or his own magnificance, or the grandeur in those around him. His stepfather who loved him was nothing but a janitor."

Today, her book is considered a landmark in the development of a new literary genre for young-adult readers, one that confronts serious social problems in a realistic, forceful way. At the time, though, *A Hero Ain't Nothin But a Sandwich* was very controversial. Some readers loved the book; in fact, it moved playwright Ed Bullins to write, "There are too few books that convince us that reading is one of the supreme gifts of being human. Alice Childress, in her short, brilliant study of a 13-year-old black heroin user, achieves this feat in a masterly way." Other readers disagreed. The book's vulgar language and troubling story-line brought much criticism and outright censorship. It was one of nine controversial books, including those by Langston Hughes, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., and others, that were banned by a school district on Long Island, New York, on the grounds of offensive content. The case was taken all the way to the United States Supreme Court. *A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich* survived this legal challenge and was made into a 1978 movie of the same name, for which Childress wrote the screenplay.

In 1979, the South Carolina Arts Council commissioned Childress to write a musical about an African-American community living on the Carolina Sea Islands off the

coast on South Carolina. Their language, Gullah, derived from the many African languages originally spoken by slaves. As Childress explained it, "During the time of slavery, Africans were often sold in mixed lots of different nationalities and language, because their owners didn't want them to communicate with one another. You see, there were about 750 different tongues spoken throughout Africa. So the slave traders hit upon the idea of forming groups, 'parcels,' by selecting one slave from each nationality. The various groups were sold for labor on different islands off the South Carolinian coast, and a language evolved from the many African languages mixed with English and even a little German." Because the islands were so isolated, the Gullah language and many African customs have been continuously preserved since the time of the slave trade. The opening of her play *Sea Island Song* (1977), for which her husband, Nathan Woodard, wrote the music, was marked by observance of "Alice Childress Week" in the South Carolina cities of Columbia and Charleston. The musical, renamed *Gullah*, was produced again in 1984 in Amherst, Massachusetts, during her tenure there as artist-in-residence at the University of Massachusetts.

Childress continued writing novels and plays, including her first adult novel, *A Short Walk* (1979), as well as a second musical, *Moms: A Praise Play for a Black Comedienne* (1986), in honor of Moms Mabley. She also wrote several young-adult novels, including *Rainbow Jordan* (1981) and *Those Other People* (1989), both of which use narration similar to *A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich*. By presenting the viewpoints of different speakers in each chapter, Childress forces her readers to consider several different attitudes about the action and the characters—and forces her readers to think, to draw their own conclusions about the story. Childress's final project was a young-adult novel about her two great-grandmothers, one African—and a slave until the age of 12—the other of Scots-Irish descent. Childress died from cancer on August 14, 1994.

ADVICE TO YOUNG WRITERS

Several years ago, Childress offered this response to a question about advice for young writers: "That's the hardest question. I can never think of anything to say, except *Write!* If someone takes up a musical instrument, he or she does not expect to master it immediately. People give up on writing too fast. I think sometimes the beginner may delay the starting procedure for too long as a means of avoiding the work. Don't worry about having perfect tools and proper conditions. You can start out with a crayon and a paper bag! Just put down what you see and think! Don't try to be perfect, just try."

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Childress was married two times. Her first marriage, about which no details are available, produced one daughter, Jean. Childress married

musician Nathan Woodard on July 17, 1957. Jean died in 1994, a few months after her mother's death. Childress also had one granddaughter, Marilyn Alice Lee, in whose honor she wrote her second children's play, *Let's Hear It for the Queen*, in 1976.

WRITINGS

NOVELS

A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich, 1973
A Short Walk, 1979
Rainbow Jordan, 1981
Many Closets, 1987
Those Other People, 1989

PLAYS

Florence, 1949
Just a Little Simple, 1950
Gold Through the Trees, 1952
Trouble in Mind, 1955
Wedding Band: A Love/Hate Story in Black and White, 1966
String, 1969
Young Martin Luther King, 1969
Wine in the Wilderness, 1969
Mojo: A Black Love Story, 1970
Black Scenes: Collections of Scenes from Plays Written by Black People about Black Experience, 1971 (editor)
When the Rattlesnake Sounds, 1975 (juvenile)
Let's Hear It for the Queen, 1976 (juvenile)
Sea Island Song, 1977; produced as *Gullah*, 1984
Moms: A Praise Play for a Black Comedienne, 1986

OTHER

Like One of the Family: Conversations from a Domestic's Life, 1956 (editor)
Wine in the Wilderness, 1969 (screenplay based on play of the same title)
Wedding Band, 1973 (screenplay based on play of the same title)
A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich, 1978 (screenplay based on novel of the same title)
String, 1979 (screenplay based on play of the same title)

HONORS AND AWARDS

Obie Award (*Village Voice*): 1956, for best off-Broadway play for *Trouble in Mind*
Outstanding Book of the Year (*New York Times*): 1973, for *A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich*

Woodward School Book Award: 1974
Sojourner Truth Award (National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs): 1975
Jane Addams Children's Book Honor Award: 1974
Louis Carroll Shelf Award (University of Wisconsin): 1974
Best Young Adult Book (American Library Association): 1975
Virgin Islands Film Festival Award: 1977
Paul Robeson Award (Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame): 1977, for outstanding contributions to performing arts

FURTHER READING

BOOKS

Betsko, Kathleen, and Rachel Koenig. *Interviews With Contemporary Women Playwrights*, 1987
Brown-Guillory, Elizabeth. *Their Place on the Stage: Black Women Playwrights in America*, 1988
Contemporary Authors New Revision Series, Vol. 27
Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol. 38
Evans, Mari, editor. *Black Women Writers, 1950-1980: A Critical Evaluation*, 1984
Notable Women in the American Theatre: A Biographical Dictionary, 1989
Something about the Author, Vol. 48
Twentieth-Century Children's Writers, 1989
Who's Who in America, 1995
Who's Who among Black Americans, 1994-1995

PERIODICALS

Amsterdam News, Aug. 27, 1994, p.12; Nov. 19, 1994, p.22
New York Times, Aug. 19, 1994, p.A24
School Library Journal, Oct. 1994, p.24

Robert Cormier 1925-
American Writer of Books for Young Adults
Author of *The Chocolate War, Beyond the Chocolate War, I Am the Cheese,* and *After the First Death*

BIRTH

Robert Edmund Cormier (COR-mee-ehr) was born on January 17, 1925, in Leominister, Massachusetts, a town about one hour west of Boston in the rolling hills of central Massachusetts. His parents were Irma (Collins) Cormier and Lucien Joseph Cormier, who worked in the local plastic comb factories. The second of their eight children, Bob Cormier had four brothers and three sisters: Norman, Leo, Gloria, John, Anne, and the twins, Constance and Charles.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"When I was five," Cormier recalls, "my three-year-old brother Leo died. In 1930 all of us kids had contracted measles, which was a common childhood disease. We all got over it except Leo, who developed pneumonia. In those days, they didn't have antibiotics, so he died. He was a golden-haired child. I remember his death and the little white coffin in the front parlor. But I was so young that a true, awful sense of loss didn't affect me. I felt that there was something weird going on, something terrible, because we moved out of the house the following week. My parents couldn't bear to be there. In fact, people moved a lot in those days. Every time another baby was born, you looked for a bigger tenement. We were eight children in all. We moved a lot."

YOUTH

Throughout these moves, the Cormier family stayed in French Hill, the French-Canadian section of Leominister. From an early age, his interests were clear. Cormier never really cared for sports or games. Instead, he spent most of his time reading, and later, writing. As he recalls, "I wasn't the physical type, the ball-playing type, and I never got chosen for the team. I was out under a tree reading a book, probably. The streets were terrible. It was depression and it was bleak, but home was warm. We had a large family, a warm family. But really, I was a skinny kid living in a ghetto type of neighborhood wanting the world to know I existed. I'd listen to the radio programs at night, Jack Benny, or famous singers and other people. I felt so unknown and so lost that I said, 'Someday I want them to know that I'm here. I exist.'"

Growing up, Cormier never felt that he fit in. "I always felt that I didn't belong. I was easily intimidated; on my paper route, being chased by dogs or going into certain neighborhoods intimidated me. I was a pretty timid kid."

EARLY MEMORIES

Cormier has spent a lot of time in the public library, as a child and to this day. It was there that he first thought about becoming a writer, that he found the books and the authors that would convince him that his experiences were the stuff of literature. "My heroes were in the library, in books. One of the greatest thrills was graduating from the childhood section [of the library] to the adult section. Then you could go into the stacks behind the circulation desk. . . . They gave me the adult card at a very early age because I zipped through all those children's books. I went from *Penrod and Sam* [by Booth Tarkington] right into Thomas Wolfe. . . . The book was *The Web and the Rock*.

"That book meant so much to me. Emotionally it was a great thing to me; in a literary way it wasn't. Thomas Wolfe was the kind of a writer who wrote mountain torrents of prose—all those adjectives. . . .

"If Wolfe opened the door emotionally to me as a writer, Hemingway opened it stylistically. He made me realize that you didn't have to have the mountain torrent of prose. You could have a clear, thin stream. He used the simple word. . . . William Saroyan also wrote simply. Hemingway wrote these great romantic things, the war hero, the wounded war hero in *The Sun Also Rises*. But Saroyan wrote about people like me, in his neighborhood in Fresno, California—the Armenian neighborhood. There I was, in a French-Canadian one. I thought God, this stuff can be the stuff of drama. I don't have to imitate Wolfe and I don't have to be a war hero. I can write about what's happening right here on French Hill."

"What's tough about the first few years of struggling with your writing is that you're imitating. You're influenced by Thomas Wolfe, so for several months you try to write like Thomas Wolfe. Then you discover William Saroyan and suddenly you're trying to write like William Saroyan. But it is all writing and learning the craft. Finally you develop your own voice."

EDUCATION

Cormier started his education at the local Catholic grade school, St. Cecilia's Parochial School in Leominister. It was there that he first began to think of himself as a writer, with the help and encouragement of one of his teachers, Sister Catherine. "But it began, I think, before then," Cormier now says. "I can't remember a time when I wasn't trying to get something down on paper. . . . I can remember when I first started to read, the fascination of a book, and I can't remember a time, really, when I haven't been a writer. That was always my escape, you know; reading and writing."

Life in a strict Catholic school was a mixture of the good and the bad. The good included several noteworthy teachers and a solid grounding in the basics. The bad included having to confess his sins when his whole class was close enough to hear him. But the worst, surely, was sitting in his classroom in eighth grade and being able to see his own house directly opposite the school suddenly consumed by a solid wall of flames. The nun refused to allow him to leave the classroom and made him sit and recite his prayers, while he worried about his mother and baby sister, who were at home. Fortunately, no one was hurt.

After finishing at St. Cecilia's, he attended the local junior high and then Leominister High School. He started to win praise for his writing, and also for his acting in the high school drama productions. Socially, though, he felt awkward and inept, especially with girls. He graduated from Leominister High School in 1942.

While his classmates went off to fight in World War II, Cormier stayed home, rejected by the military because of his nearsightedness. He went

to work at one of the local factories, working the night shift so he could attend college classes during the day at Fitchburg State College.

During his freshman year, his art teacher was so impressed with something that he wrote that she asked to see more of his work. He went home that night and wrote a short story, "The Little Things That Count." After he showed it to her, she submitted it to a Catholic magazine, the *Sign*, without telling him. That summer, she showed up at his house one Saturday afternoon with a check for $75. It was the first time he sold a piece of writing. "That was a great moment. Suddenly I was a professional writer. Until then, I was that strange kid who was always in his room scribbling. But with our American system of the dollar economy, the dollar society, as soon as you sell, you are a writer. My cousins and uncles and aunts who had thought that I was just a strange, eccentric little kid said, 'My God!, he made 75 dollars by putting words on paper.' This was miraculous to them." Cormier left Fitchburg State College after just one year.

FIRST JOBS

Beginning in 1946, Cormier held a succession of jobs in journalism that ultimately taught him the craft of writing. He started out writing commercials for a radio station, WTAG in Worcester, Massachusetts. "If you think commercials are terrible to listen to, they're awful to write," he admits. "Yet I learned so much. . . . You have to get in all the specials the store owners want to sell, and you have to write them for the *ear* not the eye, so an announcer can pronounce them correctly."

In 1948 he became a reporter for the Leominster bureau of the Worcester *Telegram & Gazette*. Over the next seven years there he covered the police beat and politics. In 1955 he transferred to the *Fitchburg Sentinel*, where he worked for over 20 years. He started out as a beat reporter, was promoted to wire service editor, and finished up as the paper's associate editor and columnist. Throughout his years as a reporter, Cormier also did his own writing at night. He wrote press releases to earn extra money, published many short stories in such national magazines as *Redbook*, *McCall's*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*, and started working on novels as well. In 1978, he left the *Fitchburg Sentinel* to write full time.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Cormier married Constance B. Senay on November 6, 1948. Cormier met Connie, a friend of his younger sister Gloria, at a dance. Bob and Connie dated for several years before marrying in 1948, after he'd gotten a good job at the newspaper. They live in Leominster, Cormier's hometown, just three miles from the house in which he was born. They have four children, all now grown: Roberta, Peter, Christine, and Renee.

ON JOURNALISM AND FICTION

"For 30 years of my life," Cormier confides, "I went around disguised as a newspaperman. I began as a street reporter, covering fires and accidents. Then, I recorded the daily politics of a lively New England city. Later I wrote headlines, editorials, and human interest columns. The most unforgettable moment of my newspaper career was writing the headline—eight columns of 96-point type—announcing the death of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas. For a brief moment, I felt that I was a part of my country's history."

"In my heart, however, I was never really a journalist but a novelist and short story writer. After turning out my daily quota of paragraphs at the newspaper, I came home—and came alive. During the evenings and often late into the night, I did my *real* writing—stories, first, and later, novels. Night and weekends my old Royal typewriter clattered and clanged as the words sang and danced on the page, although they sometimes stumbled or stalled. Newspaper writing confined me to the straitjacket of facts. In the cluttered little room in which I write even these words, my writing was like winged flight, as I create a world of my own and a town called Monument. Sitting at my typewriter, I have lived many lives—I have been Jerry Renault refusing to sell those chocolates and Kate Forrester trying to start that hostaged bus and Adam Farmer pedaling his bicycle toward an unknown destination. I have both laughed and wept while sitting here."

"Here," for Cormier, is a small, cluttered study just off the dining room on the main floor of his house. Throughout the years, Cormier has done his writing in this alcove, which contains piles of books, papers, a desk, and his old manual typewriter. Sitting in this room without a door, tuning out the distractions of a busy household, Cormier has nonetheless been able to remain a part of family life while working. He often works late into the night, which paid off when his children were in

their teen years. "I'd be awake when my kids came home at night. They knew I wasn't spying on them and we'd just talk. There are a lot of things a kid will tell you at one in the morning that he won't at one in the afternoon. I found their lives exciting and tragic. A kid could go through a whole lifetime in an afternoon on the beach."

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Cormier started writing novels in response to a personal tragedy. His father died in 1959, a loss that he felt deeply. He began writing a novel, later published as *Now and at the Hour* (1960), to deal with those feelings. "I didn't think of it as a novel; it was written as therapy. I went through a terrible decline and started writing with a furious anger. A hurt. I wanted to put the whole world in bed with my father and have them know what it was like to die." After *Now and at the Hour,* he published two more adult novels, *A Little Raw on Monday Mornings* (1963) and *Take Me Where the Good Times Are* (1965). Although sales of these early works were modest, all three were critically acclaimed, and Cormier was hailed by reviewers as a new talent to watch.

THE CHOCOLATE WAR

But nothing prepared the readers or reviewers for *The Chocolate War* (1974), Cormier's first novel for young adults and what has proved to be the foundation of his career. It is the story of a Catholic boys' school (Trinity High School), a secret student society there (The Vigils), their leader (Archie Costello), and what happens when one boy (Jerry Renault) decides not to sell chocolates for the annual school fundraiser. The story is described as working on two levels. On the surface, it is a story of a corrupt school, corrupt both in the school administration and in the student groups. But many readers found a deeper meaning, one that explored such issues as the nature of evil, passivity, conformity, and resistance, the workings of power, and the exploitation of and cruelty toward the weak.

The publication of *The Chocolate War* immediately excited a controversy. In an age in which most young adult fiction avoided dealing with real life problems and difficult endings, Cormier's novel was considered disturbing and profoundly pessimistic. The ending, in particular, was so bitter and violent, failing to offer any hope for the future, that many communities considered banning *The Chocolate War,* claiming that its deeply negative viewpoint was unsuitable for young adults. Yet others applauded this powerful, disturbing, and fascinating book for challenging its readers to think. And all praised the novel's fast-paced, gripping story, its compelling characters, and its straightforward prose style.

Many of the elements that made *The Chocolate War* so successful can be found in Cormier's subsequent works as well—an individual, usually an

adolescent, standing up to powerful social forces; political corruption; victimization; good and evil; the abuse of power; and always, good storytelling. These later works are, for the most part, equally bleak both in mood and in outcome. And response to his later works also echoes that given to *The Chocolate War.* Cormier's controversial novels typically incite a heated response, with some reviewers objecting to their grim tone and themes as unsuitable for adolescents, while others praise their realism, power, and accomplished literary style.

After the splash of *The Chocolate War,* Cormier's next young adult novel was *I Am the Cheese* (1977). This psychological suspense story is "a horrifying tale of government corruption, espionage, and counter espionage told by an innocent young victim," according to *School Library Journal.* Fourteen-year-old Adam Farmer discovers that he, and the rest of his family, have been living under assumed identities in the witness protection program. He becomes a pawn, "the cheese," trapped between organized crime and an equally deadly government bureaucracy. That book was followed by *After the First Death* (1979), another psychological suspense story. In this story about a school bus full of small children held hostage by a terrorist group, the personalities of its three teenage characters are explored: Kate, a substitute bus driver who proves to be both courageous and resourceful; Miro, one of the terrorists, whose assignment to kill the bus driver will be his "First Death"; and Ben, an innocent messenger sent by his father, a U.S. general, to negotiate with the terrorists.

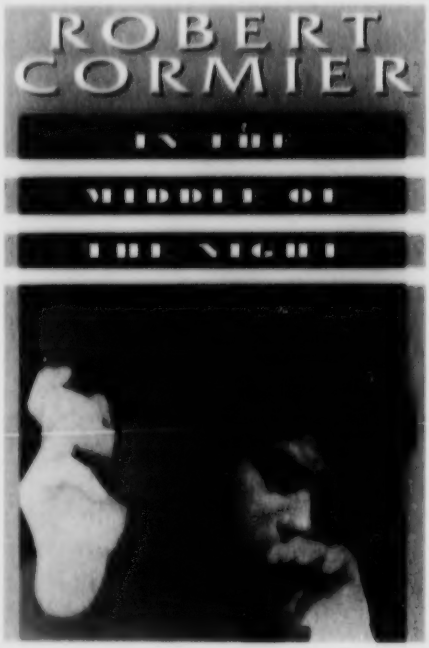
Cormier received many inquiries from teenage readers about what had happened to the characters in *The Chocolate War.* The characters were so alive to Cormier's fans that they insisted on knowing what happened next. Cormier himself was curious, so he decided to pen a sequel, *Beyond the Chocolate War* (1985), to find out. "It is the paradox of surprise and inevitability that is the chief pleasure of the book," Patricia J. Campbell wrote. "In spite of all the unexpected jolts around each corner of the plot, the overwhelming experience for the reader is a sense of rightness. We know these characters, and this is just what they *would* do, just what *would* happen. We knew it all the time—except we didn't, until Cormier told us." In addition to the familiar characters, the themes are also familiar. In *Beyond the Chocolate War,* Cormier continues and expands upon the evil machinations begun in his earlier work—the abuse of power by the strong, threats to the weak, manipulation, betrayal, and treachery.

Cormier has also written other books that are not as well known. In *The Bumblebee Flies Anyway* (1983), Cormier weaves together elements of realism and fantasy to tell the story of a group of terminally ill teenagers in the Complex, an experimental medical facility. In *Fade* (1988), we meet Paul Moreaux, who has been given the power to become invisible, a family trait that afflicts one male in each generation. And "afflicts" is the

appropriate term, because the ability to fade has a devastating affect on each family member who inherits it. In *We All Fall Down* (1991), four teenage vandals trash and destroy a home and throw a 14-year-old girl down the basement stairs. This violent and unsettling story is told from three points of view: Buddy Walker, one of the vandals; Jane Jerome, the older sister of the teenage victim and the novel's moral center; and The Avenger, who witnessed the assault and who is out to get revenge. In *Times for Bears to Dance To* (1992), Cormier tells the story of Henry, whose brother recently died and whose parents are devastated by grief. In this horrifying morality tale, Henry's abusive boss forces him to betray his friendship with a neighbor who is an elderly Holocaust survivor. In his most recent work, *In the Middle of the Night* (1995), Cormier tells the story of 16-year-old Denny Colbert. Years earlier, Denny's father was involved in a tragic accident that killed 22 children. The whole family is still haunted by the past, paying the price for that awful day.

ON HIS AUDIENCE

The subject of his readers comes up often when Cormier discusses his books. He has consistently challenged the assumption by some that a writer for YAs or children must "write down" to readers because of their youth. As he says, "My books have been accepted by young readers for which I am grateful because young readers are a marvelous audience, open and responsive. I do not, however, write books for young people but about them. I write for the intelligent reader and this intelligent reader is often 12 or 14 or 16 years old. A work of fiction, if true to itself, written honestly, will set off shocks of recognition in the sensitive reader no matter what age that reader is. And I write for that reader."



MAJOR INFLUENCES

Cormier has often stressed that he has learned the craft of writing from reading books, whose authors have in turn influenced his own writing. In particular, he stresses the

importance of telling a good story. "I think there are two great influences on my writing. One is current. I read a lot of detective stories because they always deliver. They give you a beginning, a middle, and an end—a resolution. The modern novels I read don't always deliver because I'm looking essentially for a story. As in Shakespeare, 'The play's the thing.' In particular I read detective stories for pacing, plot, and suspense."

The second great influence on Cormier came from the movies, as he recalls. "The earliest influence on me was the movies of the thirties when I was growing up. Those were stories. If you look at them now, you see the development of character and the twists of plot; but essentially they told stories. My mother didn't go to the movies because of a religious promise she made early in her life, and I used to go to movies and come home and tell her the plots of those old Warner Brothers/James Cagney movies, the old romantic love stories. Through these movies that had real characters, I absorbed drama, sense of pacing, and plot."

FAVORITE BOOKS AND AUTHORS

In addition to his early affection for Thomas Wolfe and Ernest Hemingway, Cormier mentions a whole range of favorite authors. "Salinger is such a terrific writer; he did so many great things. . . . He is one of the writers that I still reread simply because he . . . makes me feel like writing. There are certain writers who put you in the mood to write. In the way a whiff of a cigar will bring back memories of a ballgame on a Saturday afternoon, reading Salinger makes me want to get to the typewriter. *The Catcher in the Rye* is on my list of best books."

To this list, Cormier then goes on to add "Graham Greene's *The End of the Affair, The Heart of the Matter,* and *The Power and the Glory.* It's amazing that one man wrote three masterpieces. *The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze* by William Saroyan. Hemingway is looked down on now, but he was such a door-opener for us in his time. *The Sun Also Rises* is really my favorite of his books, for that time in his life; *The Old Man and the Sea,* later. I'd also include *Appointment in Samarra* by John O'Hara. He writes very differently from the way I write; he never used a metaphor in his life. Brian Moore's *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne.* They are the people who write the kind of books I love so much."

HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS

In addition to his two great passions, reading and writing, Cormier enjoys traveling, watching movies, listening to jazz, and staying up late to do both.

WRITINGS

FOR YOUNG ADULTS

The Chocolate War, 1974

I Am the Cheese, 1977
After the First Death, 1979
Eight Plus One, 1980
The Bumblebee Flies Anyway, 1983
Beyond "The Chocolate War," 1985
Fade, 1988
Other Bells for Us to Ring, 1990
We All Fall Down, 1991
Tunes for Bears to Dance To, 1992
In the Middle of the Night, 1995

FOR ADULTS

Now and at the Hour, 1960
A Little Raw on Monday Mornings, 1963
Take Me Where the Good Times Are, 1965
I Have Words to Spend: Reflections of a Small-Town Editor, 1991

HONORS AND AWARDS

Prize for Best News Writing (Associated Press in New England): 1959, 1973
Best Newspaper Column (K.R. Thomson Newspapers): 1974
Outstanding Book of the Year Award (*New York Times*): 1974, for *The Chocolate War*; 1977, for *I Am the Cheese*; 1979, for *After the First Death*
Best Books for Young Adults (American Library Association): 1974, for *The Chocolate War*; 1977, for *I Am the Cheese*; 1979, for *After the First Death*; 1983, for *The Bumblebee Flies Anyway*; 1988, for *Fade*; 1991, for *We All Fall Down*
Lewis Carroll Shelf Award: 1979, for *The Chocolate War*
Best of the Best Books 1966-1978, 1979 (*School Library Journal*): for *The Chocolate War*
Notable Children's Trade Book in the Field of Social Studies (National Council for Social Studies and the Children's Book Council): 1980, for *Eight Plus One*
ALAN Award (Assembly on Literature for Adolescents Award from the National Council of Teachers of English): 1982, for significant contributions to the field of adolescent literature
Best of the Best Books 1970-1983 (American Library Association): *The Chocolate War, I Am the Cheese*, and *After the First Death*
Best Books of the Year (*School Library Journal*): 1983, for *The Bumblebee Flies Anyway*
Notable Books (*New York Times*): 1985, for *Beyond the Chocolate War*
Margaret A. Edwards Award (*School Library Journal*): 1991, for *The Chocolate War, I Am the Cheese*, and *After the First Death*

FURTHER READING

BOOKS

Authors and Artists for Young Adults, Vol. 3
Campbell, Patricia J. *Presenting Robert Cormier*, 1985, 1989
Contemporary Authors, New Revision Series, Vol. 23
Cormier, Robert. *I Have Words to Spend: Reflections of a Small Town Editor*, 1991
Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol. 52
Gallo, Donald R., ed. *Speaking for Ourselves: Autobiographical Sketches by Notable Authors of Books for Young Adults*, 1990
Something about the Author, Vol. 45
Twentieth-Century Children's Writers, 1989

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Boston Globe Magazine, Nov. 16, 1980
Boston Magazine, Dec. 1980, p.78
Catholic Library World, July-Aug. 1978, p.6
English Journal, Sep. 1977, p.10
Horn Book, Mar./Apr. 1985, p.145 & May/June 1985, p.289 (2-part series); Mar./Apr. 1989, p.166
Lion and the Unicorn, Fall 1978, p.109
Publishers Weekly, Oct. 7, 1983, p.98
School Library Journal, June 1991, p.28; Sep. 1991, p.184
Wilson Library Bulletin, Sep. 1981, p.47

ADDRESS

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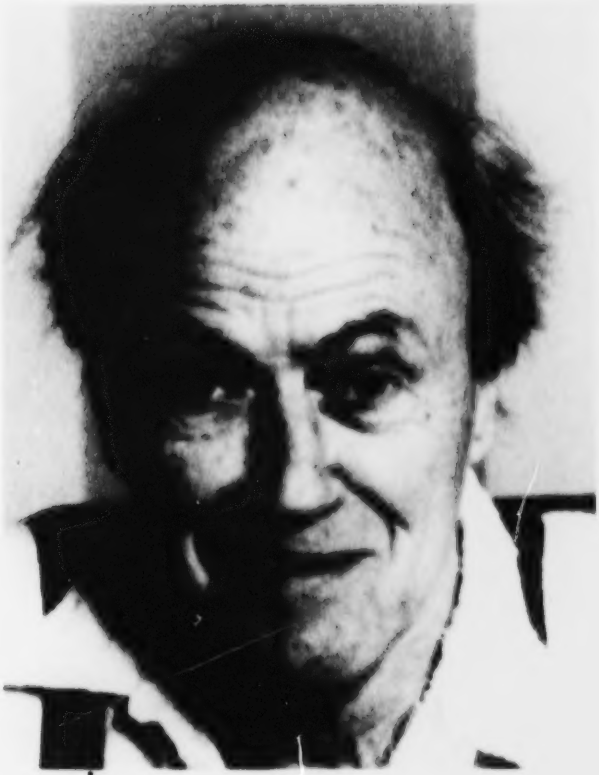


OBITUARY

Roald Dahl 1916-1990
British Novelist and Playwright
Author of *James and the Giant Peach, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory,* and *Matilda*

BIRTH

Roald (ROO-aal) Dahl, the British author best remembered for his offbeat children's stories, was born on September 16, 1916, at Llandaff, Glamorgan County, near the Welsh seaport of Cardiff. His Norwegian parents, who had moved to Wales from Oslo, were Harald Dahl, a prosperous shipbroker, horticulturalist, and painter, and Sofie (Hesselberg) Dahl. There were seven children

in the family: Roald had four sisters, Astri, Alfhild, Else, and Asta, and two half-siblings, Ellen and Louis, from their father's first marriage.

Harald Dahl died of pneumonia when Roald was four, only two months after the death from appendicitis of seven-year-old Astri. Sofie chose to remain in the family home and educate her children in British schools, as her late husband had wished.

YOUTH

Roald Dahl's first remembered home was the Victorian country mansion and farm near his birthplace, but Norway was always closest to his heart. He had happy memories of annual steamer voyages to Oslo to visit his grandparents, and of subsequent trips north to a place the family called "Magic Island," where the children spent their summer days swimming and boating in the clear Norwegian waters.

At home in Wales, young Roald was a lively boy. In spite of his inclination toward mischief, he was so favored by his widowed mother that his brothers and sisters dubbed him "Apple," as in "apple of his mother's eye." He grew tall and lean and, later, acquired another nickname, "Lofty," because he was so tall.

Dahl recounted the high-spirited adventures of his youth in his first autobiography, *Boy: Tales of Childhood*. One particular prank told of Roald and his friends, all small boys at the time, plotting a trick on a slovenly, ill-tempered candy shop owner, a Mrs. Pratchett, who sullenly doled out their purchases from the candy jar with her grimy hands. One day, as she dug into the jar to make her sale, her filthy fingers wrapped themselves around a dead mouse. She flung the container away from her, scattering sweets and broken glass across the floor. Mrs. Pratchett's revenge was cruel; she tattled on the little boys to their overbearing schoolmaster, and then witnessed the severe beatings he administered. "She was bounding up and down with excitement," wrote Dahl in grim remembrance of his own flogging. "'Lay it into 'im!' she was shrieking. 'Let 'im 'ave it! Teach 'im a lesson!'"

Some biographers have suggested that the author's later fictional works, in which he seems to be conspiring with young readers against a world of "enemy" adults (his own choice of words), stem from episodes such as this—and from the harsh and unreasonable discipline he encountered during his boarding-school days.

EDUCATION

Dahl began his early education at Llandoff Cathedral School. After the beating incident, his mother sent him off to board at St. Peter's at Weston-Super-Mare in southwestern England, where he lived throughout the school terms, coming home only on holidays. He was only seven years

old. Dahl remembered the bleak years at St. Peter's with bitterness. Decades later, as an adult, he wrote, "Those were days of horrors, of fierce discipline . . . no this or that or the other, just rules, rules, and still more rules to be obeyed. And the fear of the dreaded cane hung over us like the fear of death all the time."

By the time Roald entered upper classes (the equivalent of high school) at Repton, one of Britain's most famous "public schools" (the counterpart of private institutions in America), his family had moved from Wales to Bexley in Kent, England. Now he was not so far away from home. Dahl was only a mediocre student at Repton, as he had been at St. Peter's, but he was obsessed with games—hockey, squash, golf, cricket, boxing—and he took up photography as a serious hobby. For a boy who bristled at authority, he himself often was overbearing with the younger students and was later remembered as a bully and a merciless tease. These character traits developed throughout his life.

FIRST JOBS

Dahl didn't do well enough in school to attend either Cambridge or Oxford, Britain's elite universities. Instead, he joined Shell Oil Company in September 1934, after spending the summer before his 18th birthday on a rigorous school expedition to Newfoundland. He looked forward to travel and adventure, but Shell based him in London for two years before posting him to Dar es Salaam, Tanganyika (now Tanzania), in East Africa. Once there, he worked and lived in comfortable quarters near the Indian Ocean, a situation not much more challenging than his life at home in England. World War II was about to erupt, though, and for Dahl it "came as an exciting change in routine which, however exotic, had begun to turn stale," writes Jeremy Treglown in his 1994 book, *Roald Dahl: A Biography.*

WORLD WAR II

In September 1939, Dahl traveled up to Nairobi, Kenya, to join the British Royal Air Force. After flight training there and in Iraq, he was assigned the next year to a fighter squadron in Libya's western desert. While Dahl was on a mission that September, his plane was forced into a crash landing, and he crawled from the flaming wreckage just seconds before the gas tank exploded. His injuries kept him hospitalized in Alexandria, Egypt, for six months before he could rejoin his squadron, by then in Greece. From there, he flew missions against the Germans and, some months later, in Syria, against the Vichy forces from the pro-Nazi French government. Dahl fought with bravery and skill and was eventually promoted to wing commander, a rank comparable to that of lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army.

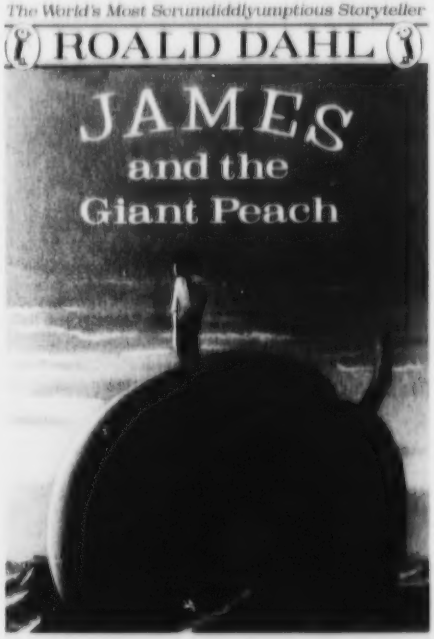
When his old injuries began to take their toll, Dahl was sent home to England on the disabled list, then soon reassigned to Washington, D.C.,

as Britain's assistant air attaché. It was in Washington that he embarked on a second career. A *New York Times* reviewer of Treglown's sharp-edged biography writes, "Storytelling began, it seems, as a way for Dahl to monopolize attention at parties; it was a way [he quotes the author] for 'assessing, and sometimes dominating, his listener'."

BECOMING A WRITER

When Dahl arrived in Washington, his exciting war experiences made him a sought-after figure in diplomatic circles. The renowned author C.S. Forester came to interview him over lunch, but found that he couldn't take notes. Dahl offered to scribble some details to flesh out the interview. "When I'd finished . . . I'd found I'd actually written a story. I called it 'A Piece of Cake'." He sent it right off.

Two weeks later, Forester sent this reply: "Dear R.D., You were meant to give me notes, not a finished story. I'm bowled over. Your piece is marvelous. It is the work of a gifted writer. I didn't touch a word of it. I sent it at once under your name to my agent, Harold Matson, asking him to offer it to the *Saturday Evening Post* with my personal recommendation. You will be happy to hear that the *Post* accepted it immediately and have paid $1,000. . . . The *Post* is asking if you will write more stories for them. I do hope you will. With my very best wishes and congratulations, C.S. Forester." That article was the beginning of a writing career, one that Dahl had never even considered. His work began to appear in other magazines, including *Atlantic, Colliers, Esquire, Harper's, New Yorker,* and *Town and Country,* and was directed in those early years to adults.



CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

His first book for children, *The Gremlins,* published in 1943, was a fanciful tale of little gnomes who sabotaged the planes on wartime flying missions, causing all the crashes. Dahl is widely credited with inventing the

name "gremlins," but their mythical existence had been a subject of folklore since the beginning of the war in Europe. It would be nearly two decades before Dahl would write another children's story, the genre for which he eventually became most famous. In the meantime, he established a reputation as an author of adult novels and short stories based on sinister themes. He wrote his first play, *The Honeys*, in 1955, and an unsettling television drama, "Lamb to the Slaughter," three years later. The latter was produced by Alfred Hitchcock, the acclaimed director of suspenseful thrillers, for his popular TV show, *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*. Later, Dahl went on to write several other screenplays for which he received considerable acclaim, including the James Bond movie, *You Only Live Twice*.

TALES FOR YOUNG READERS

In the 1960s, married to actress Patricia Neal and living most of every year in England with his growing family, Dahl began to write fiction for children as well as adults. It was an inspired move, and his tales delighted young readers with their wickedly funny story lines, rebellious characters, and malicious fun. The children are usually smart, mischievous, misunderstood, and victimized, while the adults are often stupid and cruel. The success of his books rests, Dahl would say, on his ability to conspire with children against adults. "It's the path to their affections," he once said. "It may be simplistic, but it is the way. Parents and schoolteachers are the enemy. The adult is the enemy of the child." Dahl started writing for children in the early 1960s with *James and the Giant Peach* (1961), a funny story of "*fabulous, unbelievable* things" that happen when James travels in a huge piece of fruit that crushes his two mean aunts, and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964), the story of Charlie's visit, along with four nasty children and their even worse parents, to Willy Wonka's unusual chocolate factory (later renamed, for the film, *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*). Dahl spent the next two decades spinning out grotesque childhood fantasies. His books sold in the millions and were translated into well over a dozen languages. All this time, he continued to write masterful short stories and novels for his mature audiences, too.

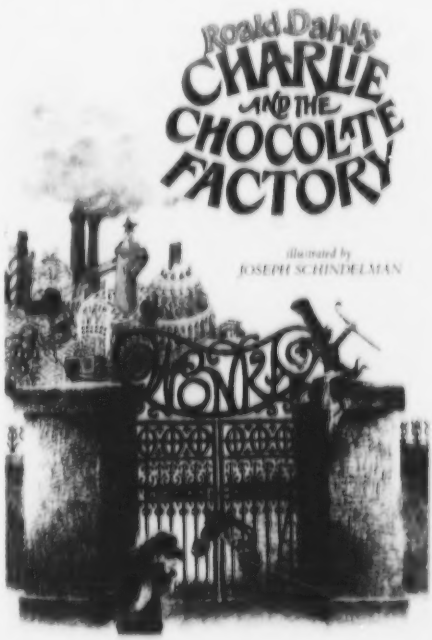
In addition to this early literary success, some of Dahl's best work for children was done during the last decade of his life. Two fascinating autobiographies, *Boy: Tales of Childhood* (1984) and *Going Solo* (1986), appeared in those years. He also published *The Twits* (1981), a hilarious story about a mean and nasty couple who play gross and disgusting tricks on each other and their neighbors; *The BFG* (1982), a fable of a Big Friendly Giant who kidnaps a girl from an orphanage and places her in Queen Elizabeth's palace bedroom; *The Witches* (1983), the story of a grandmother, an expert on witches, and her orphaned grandson, who take on a convocation of dangerous witches; and *Matilda* (1988), the story of a five-year-old genius who uses her amazing powers to defeat the heartless and brutal headmistress of her school.

Dahl was frequently criticized by children's book specialists for the cruelty of his stories, which he staunchly defended. "[Children] invariably pick out the most gruesome events as their favorite parts of the books," he said. "Children love to be spooked, to be made to giggle. They like a touch of the macabre as long as it's funny too. They don't relate it to life. They enjoy the fantasy." Underlying this tactic seemed to be his own sly revenge for the overbearing authority that had tormented him in his youth, yet many who knew Dahl saw his writings as an extension of the darker side of a complex personality. Episodes of arrogance, self-indulgence, bigotry, and racism often overrode his better traits of artistry and generosity. His reputation for intolerance and nasty temperament seemed to grow with his celebrity.

Dahl died on November 23, 1990, at the age of 74, after a brief hospitalization for an undisclosed ailment. He had worked at his craft until close to the end of his life, and five of his books were published posthumously.

MAJOR INFLUENCES

Dahl's school and war years left deep marks on his personality, and no doubt fueled much of the intolerance that found its way into his personal life as well as into his bizarre stories. But it was his mother, Sofie Dahl, who had the most powerful effect on him. Dahl credited his widowed parent with encouraging him in his wide-ranging pursuits. She was "the absolute, primary influence on my own life," he once said. "She had a crystal-clear intellect and a deep interest in almost everything under the sun."



MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Dahl was married twice. His first wife was Oscar-winning American actress Patricia Neal, whom he married in 1953. During 30 years of marriage, they had five children: Olivia, born in 1954; Tessa, born in 1957; Theo, born in 1960; Ophelia, born in 1964; and Lucy, born in 1965. Their

family story is a tale laced with crises and tragedy. In 1960, Theo had a horrifying accident in New York City that nearly took his life. The baby's pram was swept away from his nurse's grasp by a speeding taxi and dashed against the side of a bus, leaving little Theo in critical condition with multiple head injuries. He had hydrocephalus, an abnormal accumulation of fluid within the cranial cavity, and he needed a shunt to drain the fluid from his brain. The inadequacy of the existing shunt prompted his creative father to devise, with an inventor-friend and a London neurosurgeon, a more efficient valve for those suffering from hydrocephalus. The device, called the Wade-Dahl-Till valve, remains in use today. Theo has recovered to a great extent from that awful accident. The second family tragedy occurred two years later, in 1962, when Olivia, the eldest child, died of measles encephalitis at the age of seven.

In February 1965, Patricia Neal was three months pregnant with the couple's fifth child when she suffered a series of massive cerebral hemorrhages (strokes) in one evening. Because of his experiences caring for Theo, Dahl recognized the severity of her neurological symptoms. He rushed her to the hospital and insisted on calling in a top neurosurgeon. Neal's life was saved, but the strokes left her paralyzed and unable to speak. Her baby, however, was born that August without incident. Newspaper accounts of Dahl's tremendous involvement in his wife's rehabilitation intrigued readers on both sides of the Atlantic, and implied a stable marriage that was, in fact, becoming quite stormy. His bullying, authoritarian, and inflexible management of her therapy steered Neal toward a recovery that, says Richard Eder of the *Los Angeles Times*, "allowed her to pursue a genuine if diminished career on the stage and in television." The marriage, however, had already begun to fall apart, although the couple did not divorce until 1983.

That same year, Dahl married his second wife, Felicity Ann Crosland, with whom he lived until his death. They lived at Gipsy House, the Dahl family home at Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire, where he and his sisters had grown up. There in the countryside he loved, Roald Dahl indulged his passions for growing orchids, collecting art, and breeding greyhounds.

SELECTED WRITINGS

FOR YOUNG READERS

The Gremlins, 1943
James and the Giant Peach, 1961
Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, 1964
The Magic Finger, 1966
Fantastic Mr. Fox, 1970
Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator: The Further Adventures of Charlie Bucket and Willy Wonka, Chocolate-Maker Extraordinary, 1972

Danny: The Champion of the World, 1975
The Wonderful World of Henry Sugar, 1977
The Enormous Crocodile, 1978
The Complete Adventures of Charlie and Mr. Willy Wonka, 1978
The Twits, 1981
Roald Dahl's Revolting Rhymes, 1982
George's Marvelous Medicine, 1982
The BFG, 1982
The Witches, 1983
Dirty Beasts, 1983 (verse)
Boy: Tales of Childhood, 1984 (autobiography)
The Giraffe and Pelly and Me, 1985
Matilda, 1988
Rhyme Stew, 1989 (comic verse)
Esio Trot, 1990
The Dahl Diary, 1992
The Vicar of Nibbleswicke, 1992
The Minpins, 1994
Roald Dahl's Revolting Recipes, 1994 (written with Felicity Crosland Dahl)

FOR ADULTS

Sometime Never: A Fable for Supermen, 1948 (novel)
Over to You: Ten Stories of Flyers and Flying, 1946
Someone Like You, 1953
Kiss, Kiss, 1959
Twenty-Nine Kisses, 1969
Selected Stories of Roald Dahl, 1970
Switch Bitch, 1974
The Best of Roald Dahl, 1978
My Uncle Oswald, 1979 (novel)
Tales of the Unexpected, 1979
More Tales of the Unexpected, 1980
A Roald Dahl Selection: Nine Short Stories, 1980
Two Fables, 1986
Going Solo, 1986 (autobiography)
A Second Roald Dahl Selection: Eight Short Stories, 1987
Ah, Sweet Mystery of Life, 1988

PLAY

The Honeys, 1955

SCREENPLAYS

"Lamb to the Slaughter," 1958 (*Alfred Hitchcock Presents*)
You Only Live Twice, 1967 (with Harry Jack Bloom)
Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, 1968 (with Ken Hughes)

The Night Digger, 1970 (based on Joy Crowley's *Nest in a Falling Tree*)
The Lightning Bug, 1971
Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory, 1971

RECORDINGS

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, 1975
James and the Giant Peach, 1977
The Great Switcheroo, 1977 (written by Dahl and read by Patricia Neal)
Fantastic Mr. Fox, 1978
Roald Dahl Reads "The Enormous Crocodile" and "The Magic Finger," 1980
Roald Dahl, 1989 (videocassette, discussing becoming a children's writer)

HONORS AND AWARDS

Edgar Award (Mystery Writers of America): 1954, 1959, 1980
Federation of Children's Book Groups Award: 1982, for *The BFG*
Best Book of the Year (*New York Times*): 1983, for *The Witches*
Notable Book of the Year (American Library Association): 1983, for *The Witches*
Whitbread Award: 1983, for *The Witches*
West Australian Award: 1986, for *The Witches*
World Fantasy Convention Lifetime Achievement Award: 1986
Boston Globe/Horn Book Nonfiction Honor Citation: 1985, *Boy: Tales of Childhood*
International Board on Books Awards: 1986, for *The BFG*
Smarties Award: 1990, for *Esio Trot*

FURTHER READING

BOOKS

Contemporary Authors New Revision Series, Vol. 37
Dahl, Roald. *Boy: Tales of Childhood*, 1984; *Going Solo*, 1986
Something About the Author, Vol. 26 & 73
Treglown, Jeremy. *Roald Dahl: A Biography*, 1994
Twentieth-Century Children's Writers, 1989
Who's Who in America, 1990-1991
World Book Encyclopedia, 1992

PERIODICALS

Los Angeles Times, Apr. 17, 1994, Book Review, p.3
New York Times, Nov. 24, 1990, p.A26; Apr. 26, 1994, p.C21
New York Times Biographical Service, Dec. 1977, p.1615; Nov. 1990, p.1104
New York Times Book Review, May 1, 1994, p.1
Vanity Fair, Jan. 1994, p.26
Washington Post, Nov. 24, 1990, p.D5
Washington Post Book World, May 12, 1991, p.X19; Apr. 10, 1994, p.X1

Jim Davis 1945-
American Cartoonist
Creator of "Garfield" Comic Strip

BIRTH

James Robert Davis, whose comic strip featuring the adventures of a funny cat have brought him fame and fortune, was born July 28, 1945, in Marion, Indiana, to James William and Anna Catherine (Carter) Davis. Jim and his younger brother, David, grew up on their parents' farm near the neighboring town of Fairmount, in central Indiana.

YOUTH

"It was an incredibly happy childhood," says Davis of his early years. "All I remember is sunshine and pets running around"—

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

there usually were about 25 cats on the property at any given time. Illness kept Davis from outdoor activities for much of his childhood, though. He developed severe asthma before his first birthday, so he wasn't able to enjoy a normal childhood outdoors on the farm. He spent time indoors drawing, and he laughingly remembers his earliest art as being so unrecognizable that it had to be identified with labels. "I'd draw a cow," he says, "and then I'd write out C-O-W and draw an arrow to the picture." His talent and imaginative humor were obvious from the start, however, and Davis continued to draw at home and in school. By the time he reached second or third grade and could spell, he began to box his drawings, and that was the actual start of his cartooning. He enjoyed making people laugh and learned early that it was a good way to express himself.

EDUCATION

Davis continued his art work while attending Fairmount High School, creating a comic strip called "Herman." In addition, his health had improved enough by that time that he was able to play football. As a college student at nearby Ball State University in Muncie from 1963 to 1967, he was a gymnast. He majored in art and business at Ball State, but spent so much time drawing (mostly for the college paper), and so little time with his course work, that he left school before graduation. He once said he had acquired "the lowest cumulative grade-point average in the history of the university." While that may be an exaggeration, it is true that Davis did not receive his B.S. degree until many years after he dropped out.

CHOOSING A CAREER

Davis worked for a Muncie advertising agency for two years after dropping out of Ball State. But he missed cartooning, so he found a job in 1969 as an assistant to Tom Ryan, the creator of the comic strip "Tumbleweeds." Davis acknowledges that until then he had little confidence that he could earn a living drawing cartoons. With Ryan's encouragement and the discipline he was absorbing at work, though, he created a comic strip about a smart-aleck bug named "Gnorm Gnat." One Indiana newspaper carried his work, but no national syndicate expressed interest. Nearly five years of rejection slips for "Gnorm Gnat" convinced Davis that a strip about an insect wasn't marketable, so he cast around for a more acceptable subject. He found one by dreaming up a lazy, sassy cat with orange fur and black stripes, with a name and grumpy temperament borrowed from Davis's late grandfather, John Garfield Davis.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

GARFIELD

Everybody's favorite cat was born in 1976, but his image took two years to refine before he made his debut in syndicated form. On June 19, 1978,

"Garfield" appeared simultaneously in 41 newspapers across the country. Cynical, fat, pasta-eating, and nap-loving, Garfield immediately drew an appreciative readership. "Davis could not have imagined the phenomenal success and worldwide following that Garfield and his friends would command," said an early publicist.

The original premise of the cartoon was to build a story around Garfield's inept owner, Jon Arbuckle. Arbuckle and Odie, the world's dumbest dog, would be the hapless victims of Garfield's feline surliness. Although this seemed the best story route at the beginning, Garfield soon stole the spotlight. He took on a personality with "all the attributes and attitudes people are supposed to suppress in themselves," says Davis. "He's militant about his right to oversleep and overeat." Garfield's self-indulgences have been his great appeal to both cat-lovers and to those who cannot abide them. "Both kinds of readers see themselves vindicated in Garfield," says his creator.

Less than a year after "Garfield" was launched, it was appearing in 100 newspapers nationwide. Davis's first book of collected comic strips, *Garfield at Large*, was published in March 1980, and it topped the *New York Times* bestseller list within a month. Book sales reached into the hundreds of thousands, and the artist still considers it his "single biggest break toward national recognition." By the fall of 1982, there were seven Garfield books on bestseller lists, an unprecedented occurrence. Meanwhile, the cartoon spread to other newspapers in astonishing numbers: 500 by the spring of 1981; 1,000 a year later, when it became the fifth most widely distributed syndicated cartoon strip. That number has now risen to 2,400 newspapers, with daily circulation figures reported at 200 million. Today, "Garfield" is second only to the renowned "Peanuts" in syndication.

Davis's cat burst into television in October 1982 with his first animated special, "Here Comes Garfield." That successful outing on the small screen

GARFIELD YOU PROWL ALL NIGHT AND YOU SLEEP ALL DAY. YOU ALSO EAT TOO MUCH
WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY FOR YOURSELF?
YOU ONLY GO AROUND NINE TIMES IN LIFE. SO GRAB FOR ALL THE GUSTO YOU CAN GET

was followed by the Emmy-winning "Garfield on the Town" and "Garfield in the Rough." Other specials followed, and Davis's work received two more prestigious Emmys—"Garfield's Halloween Adventure" in 1986, and "Garfield: Babes and Bullets" in 1989. Still other TV tales featuring the corpulent-cat-with-an-attitude were honored with nominations for these awards.

A weekly Saturday morning show, "Garfield and Friends," catering to the two-to-eleven age group, began airing in 1988. It went into syndication in September 1993, and is expected to be seen at least five days a week by the year 2000. Even after 17 years, Garfield continues to appeal to all ages, especially to teens, who chose him as their favorite cartoon character in a recent Gallup youth poll.

A BUSINESS PHENOMENON

Since "Garfield" first appeared in 1978, Davis has created a multi-million dollar business empire. At first, Davis and the company he created, Paws, Inc. (then just his wife and one assistant), worked at tables in the family room at home. In 1981, they moved into a small house near Muncie, where he set up a studio. At the time, Davis believed that would be all the space he would ever need. He told Steve Kaelble of *Indiana Business Magazine* in 1993, "That was four or five expansions ago, and it was also about 42 employees ago—we've got 47 now." Even that number of assistants continues to grow. The new location and the constantly expanding empire keep Davis working at least 12 hours a day when he's home in Indiana. He oversees everything that his cartoon cat is involved in, and Kaelble writes that "while he no longer draws every image of Garfield in each day's strip, the humor is his." Davis works on the design and the writing, does a quick sketch, and his assistants take it from there.

The licensing of Garfield products has become big business, with thousands of products bearing the image of Davis's cantankerous cat. About 500 licensees create merchandise that ranges from prescription eyewear, to stuffed animals, to clothing items—even to bubblegum packaging—that sells in 69 countries around the world. Garfield products are labeled in more than two dozen languages. The success in consumer products alone is a phenomenon that surprises even Jim Davis. He mostly leaves the details of licensing to his Paws employees, conceding that cartooning is what he does best. "I'm a believer in people doing what their strengths are. I'd never pretend to be a businessman. . . . I'm a cartoonist." Nevertheless, he was astute enough to take over global ownership of his "Garfield" property by buying full rights in 1994 from United Media, his longtime syndicate. Today, Universal Press syndicates the comic strip, which appears in 2,400 newspapers in 83 countries, and Paws, Inc., administers all promotion and licensing.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Davis has been married since July 26, 1969, to Carolyn L. Altekruse, a former elementary school teacher whom he met at college. They and their 15-year-old son, James Alexander, called Alex, have a vacation home in Florida, but they live most of the year in Indiana. A 30-acre wooded estate north of Muncie is home to the cartoonist and his family. It is also the site of Davis's writing studio and of Paws, Inc.

MAJOR INFLUENCES

The disruptive asthma attacks that plagued Davis throughout most of his childhood were partly responsible for his choice of career. He credits his mother with encouraging him to while away the idle hours with drawings on days when illness kept him from playing outdoors. She was the one who gave him pencil and paper to draw his own pictures before he was old enough to read the comic books that eventually became his inspiration.

Charles Schultz, the creator of "Peanuts," became an idol; the off-beat humor and simplicity in that strip was an early influence. As with the art in "Peanuts," Davis's drawings are spare, and his words are as few as possible.

HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS

Jim Davis is an environmentalist who has been working for several years to return the 500 acres that surround his Paws property to a natural state. He has overseen the establishment of wetlands and reforestation. Sewage is treated naturally at Paws, and he is proud that there are no chemicals used and that the business is not producing pollution.

Golf, fishing, and chess remain favorite pastimes for Davis, who claims that he is basically a country boy at heart. The wealth that he has acquired with the resounding

success of "Garfield" has made some changes in his lifestyle, giving him mainly, he says, "the freedom to travel, not having to look at price tags, affording a little nicer wine and having lobster as much as I like." The latter two delights are always near at hand now that Davis is the owner of Foxfires, a Muncie restaurant he bought and remodeled in the mid-1980s. He has upgraded Foxfires in the past few years, with an extensive wine cellar and a sophisticated menu that doesn't even list his comic-strip cat's favorite dish—lasagna.

SELECTED WRITINGS

COMIC STRIP COLLECTIONS

Garfield at Large, 1980
Garfield Gains Weight, 1981
Garfield: Bigger Than Life, 1981
Garfield Weighs In, 1982
Garfield Treasury, 1982
Here Comes Garfield, 1982
Garfield on the Town, 1983
The Second Garfield Treasury, 1984
Garfield: His Nine Lives, 1984
Garfield Makes It Big, 1985
The Third Garfield Treasury, 1985
Garfield Out to Lunch, 1986
The Unabridged, Uncensored, Unbelievable Garfield Book, 1986
Garfield Food for Thought, 1987
The Fourth Garfield Treasury, 1987
A Garfield Christmas, 1987
Garfield Goes Hollywood, 1987
Garfield's Thanksgiving, 1988
Garfield World-Wide, 1988
Garfield Presents: Babes and Bullets, 1989 (story adapted by Ron Tuthill)
The Fifth Garfield Treasury, 1989
Garfield on the Farm, 1990
Garfield's Feline Fantasies, 1990
Garfield's Judgment Day, 1990 (story adapted by Kim Campbell)
Garfield Takes Up Space, 1991
Garfield: The Truth About Cats, 1991
Garfield Takes His Licks, 1993
Garfield Hits the Big Time: His Twenty-Fifth Book, 1993
Garfield Dishes It Out, 1995

JUVENILE BOOKS

Garfield: The Complete Cat Book, 1981
Garfield the Pirate, 1982

Garfield Goes Underground, 1983
Garfield A to Z Zoo, 1984
Garfield Goes to the Farm, 1985
Garfield the Fussy Cat, 1988
Garfield and the Tiger, 1989
Scary Tales, 1990
Garfield's Tales of Mystery, 1991
Garfield Discovers America, 1994
Garfield's Haunted House: And Other Spooky Tales, 1994

OTHER GARFIELD BOOKS

The Garfield Trivia Book (with Bill Tornquist), 1986
The Garfield Book of Cat Names (with Carol Wallace), 1988
Garfield: The Me Book (creator, Jim Kraft), 1990

In addition, Jim Davis has published a series of "U.S. Acres" comic strip collections. An abbreviated selection includes:

U.S. Acres Counts Its Chickens, 1987
U.S. Acres Rules the Roost, 1988
U.S. Acres Runs Amuck, 1989
U.S. Acres: The Big Camp Out (created by Jim Kraft), 1989
U.S. Acres: Happy Birthday Sheldon! (Kraft), 1990
Counting Sheep, 1990

ANIMATED TELEVISION SPECIALS

"Here Comes Garfield," 1982
"Garfield on the Town," 1983
"Garfield in the Rough," 1984
"Garfield's Halloween Adventure," 1985
"Garfield in Paradise," 1986
"Garfield Goes Hollywood," 1987
"A Garfield Christmas," 1987
"Garfield's Thanksgiving," 1988
"Garfield—His Nine Lives," 1988
"Garfield: Babes and Bullets," 1989
"Garfield's Feline Fantasies," 1990
"Garfield Gets a Life," 1991

WEEKLY TV SHOW

"Garfield and Friends," 1988--

HONORS AND AWARDS

Reuben Award for Best Humor Strip (National Cartoonists Society): 1981, 1986, 1990

Marketing Hall of Fame Award (American Marketing Association): 1982
Golden Plate Award (American Academy of Achievement): 1983
Emmy Award for Outstanding Animated Program (National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences): 1984, for "Garfield on the Town"; 1985, for "Garfield in the Rough"; 1986, for "Garfield's Halloween Adventure"; 1989, for "Garfield: Babes and Bullets"
Benny Award for Outstanding Service to the University (Ball State University): 1984
Distinguished Alumnus Award (American Association of State Colleges and Universities): 1985
Elzie Segar Award (National Cartoonists Society): 1985, for outstanding contribution to cartoon industry
Good Steward Award (National Arbor Day Foundation): 1990

FURTHER READING

BOOKS

Contemporary Authors New Revision Series, Vol. 41
Something about the Author, Vol. 32
Who's Who in America, 1995

PERIODICALS

Boston Globe, Mar. 8, 1987, Living section, p.105
Boys' Life, Sep. 1994, p.32
Editor & Publisher, Apr. 16, 1994, p.46
Forbes, Nov. 21, 1983, p.326
New York Newsday, Sep. 13, 1993, Kidsday Section II, p.59
People, Nov. 17, 1980, p.106; Nov. 1, 1982, p.88
San Jose Mercury News, June 18, 1989, West section, p.3
Vancouver Sun, Mar. 28, 1995, p.C6

ADDRESS

Universal Press Syndicate
4900 Main Street
Kansas City, MO 64112

John Grisham 1955-
American Novelist, Lawyer, and Former Politician
Author of *The Firm*

BIRTH

John Ray Grisham, Jr., was born February 8, 1955, in the small city of Jonesboro in northeastern Arkansas. His father was a migrant construction worker who shuttled his wife and five children throughout the Deep South, settling briefly wherever he could find work. John was about 12 when the Grishams finally put down roots in Southaven, Mississippi, which is a suburb of Memphis, Tennessee.

YOUTH

Growing up as he did in a constantly changing setting "was wonderful," Grisham told an interviewer a few years ago, soon after the publication of *The Firm*. Although he writes about evil and corruption, none of that is borrowed from his own traditional upbringing. He grew up with strong family values. Although money was always tight, Grisham says that he and his four siblings were unaware of the state of their parents' finances. "We were well fed and loved and scrubbed," he recalls fondly. He remembers the simple pleasures found in church, in school, and on the baseball diamond of his small southern city.

EARLY MEMORIES

Although his family moved often, Grisham has no recollection of ever feeling uprooted. "There was always a new town," he says, "a new church, a new school, and new friends." He remembers how quickly the Grisham kids familiarized themselves with each new place. The first thing on the agenda was to join the local Baptist church, and the second was always to "go to the library and get our library cards and check out all the books we could."

EDUCATION

John Grisham's interests during his teen years did not include serious literature, despite his voracious appetite for reading. Teachers at Southaven High School, where he was an average student, recognized in him fierce drive and supreme self-assurance, but those traits were applied mostly to baseball and to "chasing girls," by Grisham's own admission. Even at Mississippi State University, he never took a course in either creative writing or composition, and he confesses that he got a "D" in freshman English. "I never dreamed of becoming a writer. . . . My undergraduate degree is in accounting because my original goal was to become a tax lawyer," he says. He earned his B.S. in accounting from Mississippi State.

Grisham went on to study law at the University of Mississippi. He switched his focus from tax to criminal defense law when he discovered that he had a real flare for thinking on his feet in a courtroom situation. He graduated in 1981 with a J.D. degree (doctor of jurisprudence) from the University of Mississippi. After his admission to the bar that same year, he returned to his hometown to set up a private practice.

CHOOSING A CAREER

For Grisham, the first few years after law school were very demanding. He had his own private legal practice, and in 1983 he was elected to the Mississippi State Legislature, where he served for seven years. By then, he had decided to withdraw from criminal defense in his practice to

concentrate on civil law because, he says, "it is impossible to feed your family if you are representing garden-variety criminals."

In 1984, a chance courtroom encounter planted the seed for what would become his new career. At the county courthouse, Grisham happened to hear the testimony of a girl who had been raped. "This ten-year-old girl was testifying against a man who had raped her and left her for dead. I never felt such emotion and human drama in my life. I became obsessed wondering what it would be like if the girl's father killed that rapist and was put on trial. I had to write it down."

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

After that encounter, Grisham started rising early every morning to write his first novel, *A Time to Kill*. He had to squeeze time for the painstakingly slow work between time with his young family and the long daily hours in his law practice and legislative duties at the state capital. *A Time to Kill* is a southern courtroom drama about rape and parental revenge. It took Grisham three years to complete and gathered 25 rejections before it finally was accepted for publication. Initially, only 5,000 copies of that first book were printed—and Grisham bought 1,000 himself. But when his next effort, *The Firm*, became a hot property, the first book reappeared in paperback form and went on to sell five million copies.

THE FIRM

The manuscript for *The Firm* took Grisham less time than his first book. He was using a word processor, instead of writing longhand on legal pads, but he still was putting up to 70 hours a week into his law practice. He finally submitted the story to publishing houses in 1989 but it, too, "racked up a string of rejections," says *People* magazine. Publishers seemed uninterested in the story "until a bootleg copy landed in Hollywood and started a bidding frenzy." After Paramount bought the film rights for $600,000, Doubleday paid $200,000 for the rights to publish the book. The figures were a tiny fraction of what Grisham's work would soon command.

The Firm (1991) is a legal thriller about what happens to Mitchell McDeere, a recent Harvard Law School graduate, when he takes a very lucrative job at a Memphis law firm that turns out to be a front for organized crime. The book soon proved to be wildly popular. Since its publication, *The Firm* has sold more than a million copies (including paperback). In hardcover, it spent 46 weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list and was the nation's best-selling novel in 1991. It has since been translated into 29 languages. Grisham chuckles now when he remembers his wife's urgent plea for him to finish the manuscript. One day, an article about huge advances for writers caught her eye as she was leafing through a magazine. Grisham was outside taking a break next to the pool, and as he tells it,

"she came flying out the back door saying, 'Read this! Get your butt back in there and finish writing!' I did." Soon afterward, Grisham was able to close his law practice to write full time.

When the movie adaptation was released in the summer of 1993, it took the country by storm, bringing in close to $74 million in its first two weeks alone. Grisham, who still considered himself a country lawyer with a penchant for storytelling, was so awed at his sudden success that he kept repeating how he felt as though it were happening to some else.

GRISHAM'S LATER NOVELS

Since the publication of *The Firm*, Grisham has written four books set in the world of the law. All have been huge hits with his readers. He seems to write from an endless supply of story lines, all of them fed by his law-school and courtroom experiences. "Law provides lots of juicy material, lurid situations, scummy characters. The plots are practically handed to you," he acknowledged in a *Publishers Weekly* interview.

Grisham's third legal thriller, *The Pelican Brief* (1992), was published fast on the heels of *The Firm*. Like its predecessor, it was an immediate bestseller. In *The Pelican Brief*, Darby Shaw, a law student, investigates the assassination of two Supreme Court justices and soon finds herself hunted. *The Client* (1993), featuring a young boy with a deadly secret who becomes caught between mobsters and government agents, made the bestseller lists in 1993. By the time his next book, *The Chamber*, was released in 1994, *The Firm* and *The Pelican Brief* had already become box-office hits at the movies, and *The Client* had gone into production in Hollywood. *The Chamber* (1994), set on Mississippi's death row, is a book with a different appeal. "Un-Grisham-like, a non-thriller," said *Entertainment Weekly* about the story of an attorney trying to save his white-supremacist grandfather from a death sentence.

Grisham has been sued over this book by a Washington attorney for "blatantly appropriating" details from her own nonfiction account of defending serial-killer Ted Bundy. Although *The Chamber* was also claimed early for film rights, production of the movie has lagged.

Grisham's success has continued with his most recent novel. *The Rainmaker* was published in March 1995, and within a month it soared to first place on bestseller lists. This book concerns an attorney whose responsibility is to bring well-heeled clients into his firm. Since then, Grisham has been working on a new book, and has also been following director Joel Schumacher's plans for making his first novel (and Grisham's favorite), *A Time to Kill*, into a movie. He also hopes to see his only original screenplay—*The Gingerbread Man*, a product of the late 1980s—come to fruition. There are tentative plans for a small production company to start filming in 1995.

While readers have devoured his books, not all critics have been kind. Some have criticized what they see as a lack of character development and have attacked the plot structure, suggesting that his book-a-year pace was all about selling out for financial reward. Grisham has continued to crank out his stories, dismissing poor reviews as jealousy over his quick success. He does not claim to write serious literature and defends his work simply as "good, solid, commercial fiction." His readers would agree—as they eagerly await his new book every spring.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Grisham is married to Renée Jones, a former next-door neighbor who, he says, "was just a little kid when I went away to college and, when I got back, she was all grown up." Their renewed friendship led to romance and marriage. They have two children: son Ty, who played on the Little League all-star team his dad coached last year, and daughter Shea, who shares the family enthusiasm for sports by playing soccer.

The Grishams, now wealthier than they could ever have imagined, have two homes—one on a 67-acre farm near Oxford, where John went to law school, the other a 204-year-old plantation house outside Charlottesville, Virginia. The latter was purchased recently to give the family the privacy that has been so elusive since fame started to bring the curious to their doorstep.

Oxford, famous in literary circles as the small-town haven of celebrated author William Faulkner, contains the home of their dreams. The house they built on their hilltop property is Victorian in style, designed to look a century old, but constructed with modern conveniences. In the surrounding acreage there are tennis and croquet courts, a baseball field, a swimming pool, and a barn for their three horses. Grisham keeps a

well-equipped office over the garage. Wherever he does his writing, in Oxford or Charlottesville, he shares his ideas and outlines of each new novel with Renée. "She's a tough critic," he says, graciously admitting that if she likes the plot, it's a pretty good indication that it's sound.

MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES

Grisham told a moving story in a recent interview about how success has not turned his head. He spoke of a particular experience during his law-school years. Over lunch one day, one of his best friends, only 25 years old, revealed that he had terminal cancer. Grisham was stunned. "I asked him, 'What do you do when you realize that you are about to die?' He said, 'It's real simple. You get things right with God, and you spend as much time with those you love as you can. Then you settle up with everybody else.' *That* left an impression on me."

HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS

For a man who writes so convincingly of conspiracy and human drama, John Grisham lives a life without suspense. His favorite pastime is coaching Little League—baseball has been his passion since his own youth. He readily admits that he prefers school and college games to watching the pros. Beyond his enthusiasm for coaching, Grisham enjoys fishing and horseback riding (a newly developed skill) with his kids, and taking long walks on the farm with his wife.

Church has also been important to Grisham throughout his life, and the celebrity achieved in the past several years hasn't affected his interest or his dedication. In April 1993, he joined members of his congregation on a mission to build a church in a remote Brazilian village. Both he and his wife taught regular Sunday school classes before their recent move to Virginia.

Grisham recently expanded his non-stop schedule to take over as publisher of the *Oxford American*, a former literary quarterly that is now being distributed as a general-interest magazine with a Southern emphasis. He has invested both his name and his money in the project and will occasionally contribute a short story or an essay.

WRITINGS

BOOKS

A Time to Kill, 1989
The Firm, 1991
The Pelican Brief, 1992
The Client, 1993
The Chamber, 1994
The Rainmaker, 1995

ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY

The Gingerbread Man, 1991

FURTHER READING

PERIODICALS

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, Apr. 4, 1993, p.C9
Current Biography Yearbook 1993
Detroit News, Mar. 3, 1993, p.1C
Entertainment Weekly, Apr. 1, 1994, p.19
Houston Post, June 13, 1994, p.D1; Aug. 22, 1994, p.A12
Newsweek, Mar. 15, 1993, p.79
New York Times, Mar. 5, 1993, p.C29
People, Mar. 16, 1992, p.43
Publishers Weekly, Feb. 22, 1993, p.70
USA Weekend, July 1-3, 1994, p.4

ADDRESS

Doubleday
1540 Broadway
New York, NY 10036

Virginia Hamilton 1936-
American Writer for Children and Young Adults
Author of *M.C. Higgins, the Great; Sweet Whispers, Brother Rush; The People Could Fly; Anthony Burns;* and *Many Thousands Gone*

BIRTH

Virginia (Esther) Hamilton was born on March 12, 1936, in Yellow Springs, Ohio. Her parents were Kenneth James Hamilton, a musician, and Etta Belle (Perry) Hamilton, a homemaker. Virginia was the youngest of their five children, three girls and two boys.

Hamilton's family history was crucial to her development as a writer. Her maternal grandfather, Levi Perry, was a fugitive slave. "Born a slave," Hamilton writes, "as an infant he was sold away

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

with his mother, never to know his father." His mother, whose name is lost, helped Levi escape in about 1857 from Virginia to southern Ohio on the Underground Railroad. (When slavery was legal in the southern United States, the Underground Railroad was a loosely organized, secret system for hiding and transporting black slaves from the south to the north, where they would be free. It was very dangerous. Slaves who were caught were returned to their owners, or were killed.) When Levi Perry was settled in Ohio, his mother disappeared and was never seen again. She probably went back to work on the Underground Railroad, the family believes, where something might have happened to her. Levi went to live with friends. He grew up and married Rhetta Adams, whose family background included freed slaves and Cherokee Indians. Levi and Rhetta had a large family, and eventually bought land and settled in Yellow Springs. Later, their daughter Etta Belle also raised her children there, including Virginia.

It was in this family environment that Hamilton first learned to love stories. Both the Perry and the Adams families, Hamilton says, are a lively, idiosyncratic group of storytellers. "I come from a long line of storytellers," she explains. "We didn't simply state facts in our family. Events became happenings. There was always a beginning, a middle, and an end to what we said. We were a family of farmers, but my father, Ken Hamilton, and my mother's people communicated by way of stories. I'm a tale teller who writes her stories down."

"All people are storytellers, and the most fundamental form of tale telling is gossip; the delicious story of our lives told in daily episodes. When gossip grows and becomes large enough to transcend time and place, when it is handed down from one time and place to another, changed and polished, it becomes a folktale."

YOUTH

Hamilton spent her childhood in the small town of Yellow Springs. She lived a quiet rural life, exploring the countryside with her cousin Marleen, her best friend. They had the run of all the adjoining farms, owned by their aunts and uncles, whom they would stop to visit on their rambles. It was the time of the Great Depression, and many people were out of work and hungry. Living on a farm, though, they were lucky—they always had enough to eat, and some left over. "A strong childhood memory is of the men who passed through our town during the Depression—men completely broke, many for years without jobs, men who were hungry. 'Do you have work?' they would ask. My father would always find something for them to do. He would leave food by the side of the road for those passing by. 'If you give something to people who are hungry,' he'd say, 'they'll never steal anything from you.'"

When she was a child, Hamilton idolized her father. Ken Hamilton had graduated from Iowa State Business College, a rare accomplishment at

that time for a black man, but he was unable to find a job that made use of his education. He was also a musician, and a sensitive, moody, and creative man. He dreamed of being the most famous mandolin player of all time, but as a black man, he was barred from belonging to the musicians' union and from playing in all the great concert halls. He was also, in Hamilton's words, "a great reader. He loved Wendell Wilkie, whose *One World* was one of his favorite books. He knew W.E.B. Du Bois, and subscribed to *Crisis* magazine, which Du Bois edited under the auspices of the NAACP. Du Bois and Franklin Delano Roosevelt were my father's heroes. He subscribed to *The New Yorker,* and talked about what he read. Books were an important part of our lives—[Edgar Allan] Poe, [Guy] de Maupassant, many of the classics. I didn't realize then how unusual it was for a man like my father to have such a library. It was an important factor in my education."

EDUCATION

"I attended a small country school," Hamilton writes, "where we weren't taught much more than some English and history—no black history. As a matter of fact, I was the only black girl in my class until seventh grade or so. I did very well, but our curriculum was so limited it would be years before I felt reasonably well educated." Yet she loved school and she excelled right from the start. "[For] 12 years my career as one of many teacher's pets was marked by overachievement. I had those old-fashioned teachers who seemed to indulge every child with liberal doses of warmth and discipline. I graduated from high school with honors."

Despite this early academic success, Hamilton had no plans to attend college—until she learned that one of her teachers had arranged a full scholarship to nearby Antioch College. Although she desperately wanted to get away from home, to leave small-town life for the big city, Hamilton enrolled at Antioch and took writing courses there from 1953 to 1956. She then transferred to Ohio State University, studying literature there from 1956 to 1958.

While she was still in school, one of her professors advised her to leave college and go to New York to try to get published. For a while, she went back and forth between Ohio and New York, spending one semester at school and the next semester in New York. "Finally," she writes, "I took my teacher's advice and left before taking my degree. I don't have a clear recollection of the day I officially left home to go to New York. My plan was to find a cheap apartment, a part-time job, write, and have a good time. And it all came together. I took a place in the East Village, in what is today called Alphabet City. Mornings I was a cost accountant for an engineering firm; afternoons I wrote; and evenings I went out or read. I read everything I could get my hands on." She attended literature

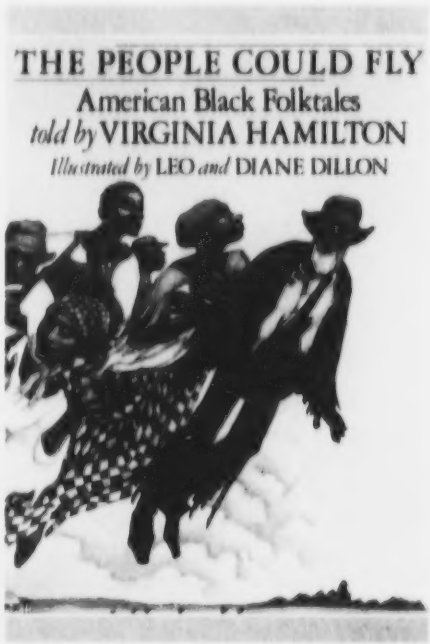
classes at the New School for Social Research and soaked up the bohemian atmosphere of the city, singing in nightclubs and meeting artists, musicians, and other writers.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

One of those writers was the poet, anthologist, and teacher Arnold Adoff. Hamilton and Adoff met at the New School in 1957 and were married on March 19, 1960. Following their marriage, they traveled for several months to Spain and to North Africa, an experience that had a profound effect on Hamilton and on her writing. They later had two children, both of whom are now grown: Leigh Hamilton, an opera singer, and Jaime Levi, a rock musician. In 1969, after several years living in New York, Hamilton, Adoff, and their two children moved to Ohio and built a home on her family land in Yellow Springs. They have lived there ever since.

BECOMING A WRITER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

By the time of her marriage, Hamilton had been working on her writing for years, although none of her work had been published yet. Then a chance suggestion—and Hamilton's response to it—made all the difference. One of Hamilton's friends from Antioch was an editor for Macmillan Publishing Company. She asked Hamilton about a story she had written in college and suggested that she turn it into a book for children. As Hamilton later recalled, it was "a happy accident—the kind of luck that hits you if you hang around New York long enough. I never really decided to write for children. It happened about the time I was thinking about giving up being a writer, since I was having trouble breaking into the adult writing field. I thought I might become an athletic instructor, or a singer—anything was better than the part-time bookkeeping, cost-accounting work I had been doing."



Fortunately, instead of giving up writing, Hamilton wrote

her first novel for young people. *Zeely* (1967) is the story of 11-year-old Elizabeth, or Geeder, as she calls herself. Visiting her uncle's farm for the summer, she becomes obsessed with Zeely Tabor, a tall regal woman, the daughter of a neighboring farmer. Geeder becomes convinced that Zeely is a Watusi queen. For a first book, *Zeely* was tremendously successful. Praised by critics and librarians, *Zeely* was chosen as an American Library Association Notable Book for 1967. The book was so exceptional, predicted the reviewer for *Publishers' Weekly*, "that no one who reads it will ever call its writer unknown again." That reviewer was soon proved right.

"[Not] only did it usher in the modern era of African-American children's literature," Rudine Sims Bishop wrote in *Horn Book* on the 25th anniversary of the publication of *Zeely*, "it launched the career of one of America's most remarkable literary artists. *Zeely*—with its air of mystery, its plumbing of ancestry and heritage, its evocation of a warm and nurturing extended family, its use of symbolism and myth, its strong evocation of place, and its display of Hamilton's wondrous way with words and images—contains many of the elements that would become Hamilton trademarks, marks of a craft that has been finely honed through some 30 published books in just over 25 years."

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Today, Hamilton is considered an inventive, imaginative, complex, and challenging writer. She is widely acclaimed for her rich and diverse body of work. Her books are tremendously varied in subject, style, setting, and genre. She has published collections of folktales, biographies, and novels. Her novels include science fiction and fantasy, mysteries, and realistic stories. Yet even her realistic novels include elements of dream, myth, history, and legend. Hamilton documents the rich heritage of black Americans, showcases strong family ties, introduces distinctive, memorable characters, and, above all, weaves compelling stories.

Just a partial listing of her acclaimed fictional writings highlights the breadth of her work. *The House of Dies Drear* (1968), her next work after *Zeely*, is a mystery story about a 13-year-old boy who moves into a house that was owned by abolitionist Dies Drear. This house, which was used as a way-station on the Underground Railroad, comes complete with secret passages, ghosts, and present-day mysteries. In *The Planet of Junior Brown* (1971), three isolated individuals reach out to help each other: the fat musician Junior Brown, his friend Buddy Clark, and the school janitor, Mr. Pool. Hamilton's next book, *M.C. Higgins, the Great* (1974) is considered by many to be her best. This story about the Higgins family shows their fierce dedication to each other and to their home on Sarah's Mountain, which is threatened with destruction. The three novels comprising the "Justice" trilogy, *Justice and Her Brothers* (1978), *Dustland* (1980), and

The Gathering (1981), which feature 11-year- old Justice and her 13-year-old twin brothers, contain elements of science fiction, like extra-sensory perception (ESP) and time travel. *Sweet Whispers, Brother Rush* (1982) tells the story of the love found in an unconventional family: sister Tree, retarded brother Dab, their mother, Vy, and Brother Rush, a ghost, as Tree struggles to understand her complicated and difficult family history. In the dramatic and humorous novel *Cousins* (1990), Hamilton tells the story of Cammie. It describes Cammie's feelings of rivalry toward her cousin Patty Ann, her love for her grandmother, and the trauma that befalls the family. In *Drylongso* (1992), a retelling of a myth, Hamilton recounts the story of a farming family struggling with drought. *Plain City* (1993) is the story of a 12-year-old girl of mixed racial heritage who comes to terms with her difficult family history and with her father.

In addition to these fictional works, Hamilton wrote in other genres as well. She wrote biographies of two great black American leaders: *W.E.B. Du Bois: A Biography* (1972) and *Paul Robeson: The Life and Times of a Free Black Man* (1974). She also collected myths and folktales from many different cultures, including the black tradition, in both *The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales* (1985) and *In the Beginning: Creation Stories from around the World* (1988). In *Anthony Burns: The Defeat and Triumph of a Fugitive Slave* (1988), "a narrative of historical reconstruction," she combined history and fiction to tell the life story of a runaway slave in the 1850s. More recently, in the collection *Many Thousand Gone: African Americans from Slavery to Freedom* (1992), she included 35 pieces, each a brief biography of a real person, that trace the history of African Americans in this country. Hamilton's most recent book, *Jaguarundi* (1994), represents a departure for her. This story for younger readers, in picture-book format, tells about animals in the rain forest and the threats that humans pose to animals and their habitats.

Hamilton's writings are held in high esteem by professionals in the field, and they

have been generous in honoring her. For *M. C. Higgins, the Great*, considered by many her greatest fictional work, Hamilton won the prestigious John Newbery Medal, becoming the first African-American writer ever to win that award. In addition, *M.C. Higgins, the Great* was the first book to be awarded the three most prestigious awards in literature: the Newbery, the *Boston Globe—Horn Book* Award, and the National Book Award. Hamilton has also won the Edgar Allan Poe Award, the Lewis Carroll Shelf Award (two times), the Coretta Scott King Award (three times), and the *Boston Globe—Horn Book* Award (three times), among many others. In 1992, Hamilton won the Hans Christian Andersen Author Award, an important international award, for her "profound humanity, breathtaking depth and complexity, and innovative and poetic use of language, especially the vernacular of Black America." In 1995, Hamilton won the Laura Ingalls Wilder Award, a significant award given by the American Library Association (ALA). This honor is given once every three years to an author who has made a lasting contribution to children's literature. In granting Hamilton this award, Tish Wilson, speaking for the ALA, summarized her achievement: "Hamilton draws on specifics of her own African-American and American Indian heritage to illuminate the universals of human experience. Creating consistently excellent works of fiction, folklore, and biography, Hamilton's body of work is unparalleled in its breadth and depth."

WRITINGS

Zeely, 1967
The House of Dies Drear, 1968
The Time-Ago Tales of Jahdu, 1969
The Planet of Junior Brown, 1971
W.E.B. Du Bois: A Biography, 1972
Time-Ago Lost: More Tales of Jahdu, 1973
Paul Robeson: The Life and Times of a Free Black Man, 1974
M.C. Higgins, the Great, 1974
The Writings of W.E.B. Du Bois, 1975 (editor)
Arilla Sun Down, 1976
Justice and Her Brothers, 1978 (first novel in the "Justice" trilogy)
Dustland, 1980 (second novel in the "Justice" trilogy)
Jahdu, 1980
The Gathering, 1981 (third novel in the "Justice" trilogy)
Sweet Whispers, Brother Rush, 1982
The Magical Adventures of Pretty Pearl, 1983
Willie Bea and the Time the Martians Landed, 1983
A Little Love, 1984
Junius over Far, 1985
The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales, 1985

The Mystery of Drear House: The Conclusion of the Dies Drear Chronicle, 1987
A White Romance, 1987
In the Beginning: Creation Stories from around the World, 1988
Anthony Burns: The Defeat and Triumph of a Fugitive Slave, 1988
Bells of Christmas, 1989
Cousins, 1990
The Dark Way: Stories from the Spirit World, 1990
The All Jahdu Storybook, 1991
Many Thousand Gone: African Americans from Slavery to Freedom, 1992
Drylongso, 1992
Plain City, 1993
Jaguarundi, 1994

HONORS AND AWARDS

Notable Children's Books (ALA): 1967, for *Zeely*; 1968, for *The House of Dies Drear*; 1974, for *M.C. Higgins, the Great*; 1976, for *Arilla Sun Down*; 1980-81, for the *Justice* trilogy; 1982, for *Sweet Whispers, Brother Rush*; 1983, for *The Magical Adventures of Pretty Pearl*; 1983, for *Willie Bea and the Time the Martians Landed*; 1985, for *The People Could Fly*; 1988, for *Anthony Burns*; 1990, for *Cousins*
Edgar Allan Poe Award: 1969, for *The House of Dies Drear*, for best juvenile mystery
Lewis Carroll Shelf Award: 1971, for *The Planet of Junior Brown*; 1974, for *M.C. Higgins, the Great*; 1988, for *Anthony Burns*
Boston Globe—Horn Book Award: 1974, for *M.C. Higgins, the Great*; 1983, for *Sweet Whispers, Brother Rush*; 1988, for *Anthony Burns*
John Newbery Medal (ALA): 1975, for *M.C. Higgins, the Great*
National Book Award: 1975, for *M.C. Higgins, the Great*
Best Book for Young Adults (ALA): 1982, for *Sweet Whispers, Brother Rush*; 1988, for *Anthony Burns*
Coretta Scott King Award: 1983, for *Sweet Whispers, Brother Rush*; 1984, for *A Little Love*; 1989, for *Anthony Burns*
New York Times Best Illustrated Children's Book Award: 1986, for *The People Could Fly*
Regina Medal (Catholic Library Association): 1990
Hans Christian Andersen Author Award (International Board on Books for Young People): 1992
Laura Ingalls Wilder Award (ALA): 1995
MacArthur Laureate Award: 1995

FURTHER READING

BOOKS

Contemporary Authors New Revision Series, Vol. 37
Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol. 52

Gallo, Donald R., ed. *Speaking for Ourselves: Autobiographical Sketches by Notable Authors of Books for Young Adults*. 1990
Mikkelsen, Nina. *Virginia Hamilton*, 1994
Montreville, Doris de, and Elizabeth D. Crawford. *Fourth Book of Junior Authors and Illustrators*, 1978
Something about the Author, Vols. 56 and 79
Twentieth-Century Children's Writers, 1989
Who's Who in America 1995
Who's Who among Black Americans 1994-1995
World Book Encyclopedia, 1994

PERIODICALS

Booklist, Feb. 1, 1992, p.1020
Boston Globe, Apr. 14, 1987, p.61
Columbus Dispatch, Mar. 13, 1994, p.F1
Horn Book, Dec. 1972, p.563; Aug. 1975, p.337 & p.344; Nov./Dec. 1992, p.674; Mar./Apr. 1993, p.175

ADDRESS

Scholastic Books
555 Broadway
New York, NY 10012-3999

OBITUARY

James Herriot (Pseudonym of James Alfred Wight) 1916-1995
English Veterinarian and Writer
Author of *All Creatures Great and Small*

BIRTH

James Alfred Wight, known to the world as James Herriot, was born October 3, 1916, in Sunderland, England. He was the only child of James Henry and Hannah Wight, both musicians. His father was an orchestra leader and the pianist at the local movie theater, and his mother was an opera singer. When he was three days old, his parents took him to Glasgow, Scotland, where he was raised.

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CHOOSING A CAREER

Herriot remembers that as a young person he was "very vague about what I wanted to do. My parents both were musicians and they sent me for piano lessons. I didn't show any great promise there although I still love to play the piano whenever I have the time." He decided to be a vet when he was 13. He was reading a story in a magazine about a vet. "The writer was talking about being a vet and it just sort of hit me—I suddenly felt, golly, that's what I want to do."

EDUCATION

Herriot attended Hillhead High School in Glasgow. His writing talents were recognized by his teachers when he was in school. But although he was good at writing essays, he said "I must have been lazy during my younger years because I never even bothered to try and write a short story." That would come later. He went on to study veterinary medicine because he loved animals and being outdoors. He couldn't imagine a job in an office. He attended Glasgow Veterinary College, from which he graduated in 1939. He graduated at the end of the Depression, a time when many people the world over were out of work. He was delighted when he was hired by a small country practice in Yorkshire, in the north of England.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

A COUNTRY VETERINARIAN

Herriot moved to the rural community of Thirsk, Yorkshire, to work in the practice of Donald Sinclair. Except for a break in the 1940s to serve in the Royal Air Force in World War II, Herriot was to spend the rest of his life in Yorkshire. Sinclair, Thirsk, and the people he worked and lived with and the animals he nursed back to health were to make him famous. He kept a daybook in which he jotted notes about the people and the animals of the little Yorkshire town. He loved the work and the atmosphere, and he became quite a storyteller, regaling his friends and family with the tales of his work.

BECOMING AN AUTHOR

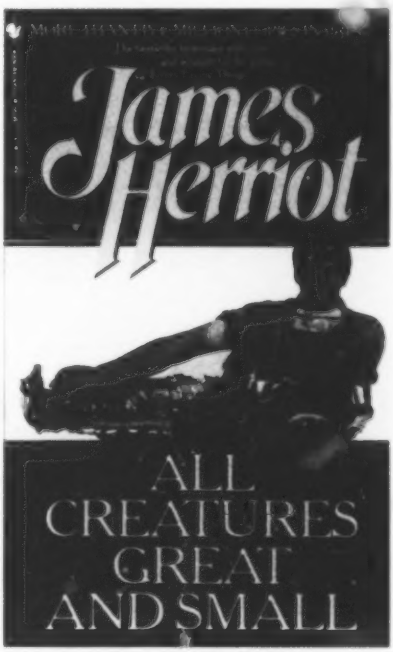
In his fifties, he began to toy with the idea of finally putting his stories on paper. His wife, Joan, to goad him on, told him that no one became an author after 50. Herriot took up the challenge. First he read books on how to write, as well as the works of classic prose stylists like Charles Dickens and Arthur Conan Doyle. And, incited by Joan's words, he bought a typewriter and started to write down his stories, often working in front of the television.

While writing that first book, Herriot would often watch soccer on TV. British vets are held to a strict code of conduct, and someone who wrote about work as a vet, using his own name, could be charged with self-promotion and advertising. He knew that he had to guard his professional integrity against charges that he was advertising his practice, so he choose a pseudonym. The one he chose was that of a Scottish goalie he saw on television, James Herriot.

Herriot finished his first book, *If Only They Could Talk*, in 1968. He sent it to many different publishers, all of whom refused it. "I became a connoisseur of the sick thud that a rejected manuscript makes on the doormat," he remembered. Finally, it was accepted and published in 1970. But it was, Herriot recalled, "kindly if rather condescendingly, reviewed" and made very little stir in the English publishing world. His second book, published in England as *It Shouldn't Happen to a Vet*, met with the same cool reception in England, but it caught the eye of Thomas McCormack, then an editor at St. Martin's Press in the U.S. McCormack thought the book had great potential in the American market, and he was right.

ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL

McCormack took Herriot's first two books and published them in the U.S. as *All Creatures Great and Small* (1972). The book became a huge success, selling millions of copies in over 20 languages and making Herriot a household name. An important catalyst for the book's success in the U.S. came from a review in the *Chicago Times*, in which the critic Alfred Ames wrote "If there is any justice, this book will become a classic of its kind. With seemingly effortless art, this man tells stories with perfect timing." Much to the amazement of Herriot, he became the success Ames had predicted.



In *All Creatures Great and Small* and its sequels, Herriot recreated the rural Yorkshire village of Thirsk as the imaginary "Darrowby." Herriot

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himself appears as the character James, who shares in the veterinary practice of Siegfried Farnon (based on Donald Sinclair) and his brother Tristan (based on Sinclair's brother, Brian). Even Herriot's wife, Joan, appears as Helen in the stories. The tales depict country life in a world that was fast disappearing at the time Herriot began to write. "In the days before antibiotics, steroids, and all the modern drugs, being a vet was almost like being a witch," recalled Herriot. "Very eccentric, these old farmers. The new farmer is a scientific chap—very nice and all that. But I thought, well, that era is never going to come again. I want to get it on paper before it disappears." The stories feature the lives of the people of Yorkshire and their animals. Herriot revealed the extraordinary in the ordinary: the farmers, rugged, gruff and taciturn, shared his love for the animals in his care. Together, they would glory in the birth of a new calf, or saving the life of an ailing horse.

Working seven days a week, Herriot somehow managed to continue writing for 25 years, stealing moments in the evening to feed the requests of his millions of fans for more books about the denizens of Yorkshire. He often worked out his tales while he was on the road, sometimes talking into a Dictaphone. "I spend a lot of time alone and it gives me something to think about," he once said. In his later books, including *All Things Bright and Beautiful* (1974), *All Things Wise and Wonderful* (1977), and *Every Living Thing* (1992), Herriot continued his tales of the life of a country vet, and his eager fans snapped up every book.

The books were made into feature films and a very popular BBC television production, also called *All Creatures Great and Small*, that was seen all over the world in the 1970s and 1980s and is still in reruns on cable television stations across the U.S. Herriot's success, particularly in the States, was a great puzzle to him. He could only think that "North Americans are even bigger animal lovers than the British."

Herriot's books made him very wealthy. At the time of his death, his books had sold more than 50 million copies. But even when he became a millionaire, Herriot stayed in his beloved Yorkshire. In England, wealthy taxpayers must pay 83 cents in taxes on every dollar they earn. Many successful Britons move to other countries to protect their wealth. But Herriot had no intentions of moving. "The Yorkshire Dales are just the same as they were thousands of years ago and I love them too much to ever leave them," he said.

Herriot refused to change his life after his success. He continued to practice as a vet in the same vet's office, which the English refer to as the "surgery," until well into his 70s. His only indulgence was to move his family from an apartment to a small house outside of town overlooking a duck pond.

Herriot was uneasy with his fame. His many fans insisted on interrupting his quiet country life. Busloads of people came to visit him at his office in Thirsk, in what travel agents began to call "Herriot Country." He would be polite, but he limited his time with his fans, focusing instead on his animal patients and their needs. "Literally thousands of [fans] come to the surgery," he recalled. "I see them at 2:45 on Wednesdays and Fridays and rattle my dog charity box at them. They're very generous people. I make about 100 pounds [about $160] a time."

Although Herriot's practice focused mainly on large farm animals, like cows and sheep, he also took care of pets, and he especially loved dogs. "I could never quite take dogs for granted. Why were they so devoted to the human race? Why should they delight in our company and welcome us home in transports of joy?" He had many beloved dogs in his life, including Hector, a Jack Russell terrier, Dan, a black Lab, and a border terrier named Bodie.

Herriot's books also had a great influence on the youth of Great Britain, as a generation of young people grew up wanting to become vets. Before his books popularized the profession, the demand for vets always exceeded the number available. But after his books, the number of applicants to veterinary schools soared, and it was harder to get into vet school than it was to get into medical school.

In the 1980s, Herriot began to write children's stories. These simple tales were often drawn from real-life stories told to him by pet owners in his practice. They feature cats and dogs and other beloved pets. Herriot's description of *A Christmas Day Kitten* reveals both the content and the warmth of his stories, both for children and adults: "It's about a stray cat that used to come into this woman's house for years—come in, have a bowl of milk, and then shoot off again. One Christmas, it came in with a kitten in its mouth. It laid down the kitten and then died. It had brought the kitten to the only warm place it knew."

HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS

Herriot spent the last years of his life easing his way out of his veterinary practice and devoting himself more to his family, especially his grandchildren. He also loved to hike and to read, particularly history and biography. Of his life, he said, "If you get married and have kids, that's the main thing, isn't it? And I've lived in this beautiful district, having the great pleasure of being associated with animals. Oh, aye, it's been a marvelous life."

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Herriot married Joan Danbury, whom he met in Thirsk, in 1941. They had two children, Rosemary and James. Rosemary is now a physician and James is a vet in his father's old practice. Both live within a mile of their parents. In 1992, Herriot was diagnosed with prostate cancer. He died of cancer on February 23, 1995.

Herriot touched many people with his warm and thoughtful work, and many tributes poured in. Thomas McCormack, Herriot's early champion in the U.S. and now the head of St. Martin's Press, said this: "James's unique blend of warmth and joy and skill as a writer made him perhaps the most personally beloved storyteller of his time. When people ask me what he was like, I say, "If you know his books you know James." More than any other author I've met, he was his books."

Herriot himself remained the thoughtful, modest man depicted in his books. "Undoubtedly, I am the best-known vet in the world," he said. "But as a vet, I'd say I was run-of-the-mill." He knew his clients were unconcerned about this literary side: "If a farmer calls me with a sick animal, he couldn't care less if I were George Bernard Shaw," he said.

Yet one of his most cherished tributes came from a Yorkshire farmer, who, after being told that his vet was the famous James Herriot, said, "Well, he's not a bad vetern'ry, either."

HONORS AND AWARDS

British Veterinary Association: Honorary Member: 1975
Order of the British Empire: 1979
Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons: Fellow, 1982

WRITINGS

FOR ADULTS

If Only They Could Talk, 1970
It Shouldn't Happen to a Vet, 1971

All Creatures Great and Small, 1972
All Things Bright and Beautiful, 1974
All Things Wise and Wonderful, 1977
The Lord God Made Them All, 1981
James Herriot's Dog Stories, 1986
Every Living Thing, 1992
James Herriot's Cat Stories, 1994

FOR CHILDREN

Moses the Kitten, 1984
The Christmas Day Kitten, 1986
Blossom Comes Home, 1988
The Market Square Dog, 1989
Oscar, Cat-About-Town, 1990
Smudge, the Little Lost Lamb, 1991
James Herriot's Treasury for Children, 1992

FURTHER READING

BOOKS

Sternlicht, Sanford. *All Things Herriot: James Herriot and His Peaceable Kingdom*, 1995
Who's Who in America, 1995

PERIODICALS

Chicago Tribune, June 1, 1986, Home section, p.1
Life, Mar. 1988, p.65
Maclean's, May 29, 1978, p.4
McCall's, May 1984, p.6
New York Times, Feb. 24, 1995, p.C16
People, July 18, 1994, p.47; Mar. 13, 1995, p.104
Philadelphia Inquirer, Feb. 24, 1995, p.A24
Smithsonian, Nov. 1974, p.90
The Times (London), Feb. 24, 1995

S.E. Hinton 1948-
American Writer of Young-Adult Novels
Author of *The Outsiders, Rumble Fish,*
and *Tex*

BIRTH

Susan Eloise Hinton, known to the world by her pen name S.E. Hinton but known to her family and friends as Susie, was born on July 22, 1948, in Tulsa, Oklahoma. (Some sources list her year of birth as 1949 or 1950, but 1948 appears to be the correct date.) Her father, Grady P. Hinton, died while Hinton was in high school, but her mother is still alive and living in Tulsa. Hinton has one sister, Beverly, who is two years younger.

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YOUTH

Hinton is a very private person who has given out very little information about her personal life. She believes that a writer should be known by what she has written, not by what she has to say. Still, she has shared a few details of her early life in Tulsa. "I had a 'normal' childhood, with parents, a younger sister, cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents, dogs, cats, etc. (although I had to wait until I was grown to get my first horse). I was a tomboy, played football, hunted; most of my close friends were boys, which probably accounts for my use of a male narrator."

EDUCATION

Hinton attended public schools in Tulsa, Oklahoma. She graduated from Will Rogers High School in 1966 and went on to attend the University of Tulsa. Although she started out majoring in journalism, she switched to education and earned her B.S. degree in 1970.

BECOMING A WRITER

By that point, though, she was already a famous author. Hinton started writing when she was very young. As she tells it, "I started reading about the same time everyone else did, and began to write a short time later. The major influence on my writing has been my reading. I read everything, including Comet cans and coffee labels. Reading taught me sentence structure, paragraphing, how to build a chapter. Strangely enough, it never taught me spelling."

"I've always written about things that interest me, so my first years of writing (grade three through grade ten) I wrote about cowboys and horses. I wanted to be a cowboy and have a horse. I was strange for my era, but feel quite comfortable in this one, when everyone wants to be a cowboy and have a horse."

She started out writing short stories, journal entries, and poetry, and then wrote two books about cowboys and horses. At the age of 15, she began writing *The Outsiders*, her first and still her most famous novel.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

THE OUTSIDERS

With no formal training, Hinton started writing a novel. Her first draft was about 40 pages. After finishing that, she went back to work revising it, rewriting and adding details. Over the course of a year and a half, she wrote three completely new drafts before the book was finished. She did much of the work during her junior year (1964-65) at Will Rogers High School. She often jokes that "During my junior year in high school, when

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I was doing most of my work on *The Outsiders*, I made a 'D' in creative writing. My revenge is to print that fact as often as possible."

That was a particularly tough time for the Hinton family. Her father was hospitalized with brain cancer; he died that year. Her mother spent much of her time at the hospital. During that difficult year, Hinton spent most of her time either alone in her room or working on her novel at the dining room table.

The inspiration for *The Outsiders*, according to Hinton, was her own reading experiences. "When I got started," she explains, "there was no realistic fiction being written for teenagers. It was all Mary Jane goes to the prom, that kind of stuff. I'd been to a few proms and they weren't anything like that. There weren't any books that dealt realistically with teenage life so I wrote *The Outsiders* to fill that gap." In her view, high school was a cold, cruel world. Kids divided up into cliques—the lower-class greasers and the upper-class "socs," or socials. Membership in a clique was based on the family's financial and social status. Decisions about friendship and dating were based on improving one's reputation, not on real feelings.

In *The Outsiders* (1967), Hinton set out to write a realistic novel of teen life. The novel focuses on a gang of greasers—all "outsiders" in their world—and their ongoing battles with the socs and all respectable society. It's a violent and hostile world, with no adult protectors. The boys' parents are all either dead, abusive, or simply uninterested. Despite their tough exterior, these teenage boys demonstrate a sensitive side and a fierce sense of loyalty and allegiance to each other. They are devoted friends. In effect, the gang members become a family to one another.

The novel is narrated by Ponyboy Curtis, the youngest member of the gang. Because Hinton used a male narrator and signed the book with her initials instead of her first name, many were surprised to discover that she was female. To explain her use of a male narrator, Hinton discusses American society in the mid-1960s, when she was a teenager. "That's the point of view I'm most comfortable with," she says. "When I was growing up, most of my close friends were boys. In those days, girls were mainly concerned about getting their hair done and lining their eyes. It was such a passive society. Girls got their status from their boyfriends. They weren't interested in doing anything on their own. I didn't understand what they were talking about."

The publication of *The Outsiders* in 1967 caused a sensation in the literary world. Many adults, parents and librarians both, objected to the lack of adult role models and the matter-of-fact violence and cruelty in the book. But the novel was an immediate hit with teenagers, who responded to its realistic language, heart-felt emotions, action-packed plot, and

sympathetic characters. As Hinton explains, "I was fortunate to hit on a universal theme—the "In" group versus the "Out" group, which is one reason why the book is still being read today. The labels may change, but the groups go on forever. I also wrote it at the right time. The emotions is *The Outsiders*, strong as they are, are the true emotions of a teenager." Her readers would agree. After selling four million copies, the book is known, among teachers and librarians, as one novel that will motivate and inspire kids to read.

The Outsiders had a profound effect on other writers as well. The book represented a radical change from standard young-adult fiction, and it inspired other authors to try more sophisticated themes and plots as well. According to critic Patty Campbell, writing in the *New York Times Book Review*, the publication of *The Outsiders* "gave birth to the new realism in adolescent literature."

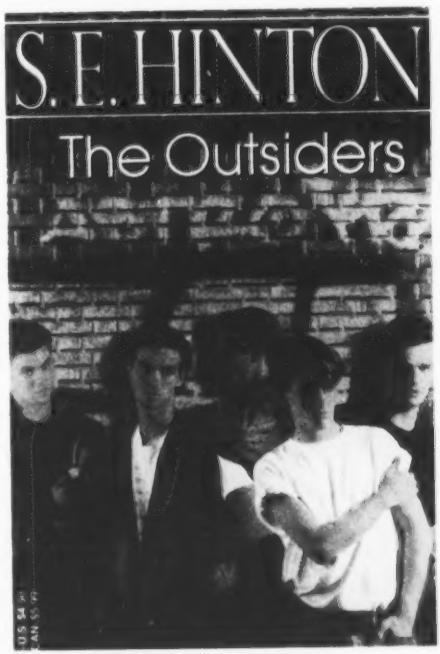
LATER WRITINGS

Hinton has built on that early promise in her subsequent books. Her next four young adult novels share many similarities with her first book. In each, the narrator is a teenage boy who is facing a violent, uncertain world without adult protectors. Conflicts revolving around class and social status figure prominently. "While recklessness generally gets punished," Gene Lyons wrote in *Newsweek*, "her books are never moralistic—all manner of parental rules are broken with impunity. Hers are tales of honor, emotional kinship, loyalty, and betrayal." And in all of Hinton's books, the characters are, perhaps, her greatest achievement. As she says, "I'm a character writer. Some writers are plot writers. . . . I have to begin with people. I always know my characters, exactly what they look like, their birthdays, what they like for breakfast. It doesn't matter if these things appear in the book. I still have to know. My characters are fictional. I get ideas from real people, sometimes, but my characters always exist only in my head. . . . Those characters are as real to me as anyone else in my life, so much so that if I ran into one of them at the laundry I wouldn't be all that surprised."

Hinton's second novel, *That Was Then, This Is Now*, was perhaps the hardest for her to write. The media outcry that accompanied the publication of *The Outsiders* seemed to have stifled her voice, for a time. She had a desperate case of writer's block—she couldn't even sit down at the typewriter to compose a letter. With the help of her then-boyfriend (and future husband) David Inhofe, she finally overcame it. As she says, "David made me write *That Was Then, This Is Now*. When I was writing for fun, I loved it; when it turned into a profession it scared me. I kept thinking 'You don't know what you're doing.' I wrote *That Was Then* over a period of three or four months, two pages a day, never looking back. David

was my boyfriend at that time; if I didn't get my two pages done, we didn't go out."

In *That Was Then, This Is Now* (1971), Hinton traces the relationship of Byron and Mark, who have been best friends since childhood but who are growing apart. Now at 16, they face a crisis when Byron discovers that Mark is pushing drugs. Like *The Outsiders*, the novel focuses on street life and explores the themes of friendship, trust, and betrayal. In *Rumble Fish* (1975), tough-guy narrator Rusty-James wants to be like his older brother, known as Motorcycle Boy, who continually bails him out of trouble. Finally, Motorcycle Boy becomes overwhelmed with his own troubles, leaving Rusty-James hopelessly disillusioned. In *Tex* (1979), Hinton tells the story of two brothers left on their own after their mother dies of pneumonia and their father goes off to ride the rodeo. The older brother, Mason, takes care of their home and the younger brother, Tex, when their father neglects to visit or send money for months at a time. With its disciplined and controlled structure and mature style, *Tex* is considered by many reviewers to be Hinton's most accomplished novel to date. And, in fact, Tex McCormick is Hinton's favorite character. After a hiatus in which Hinton had a baby and collaborated in the filming of her earlier novels, she wrote her most recent young adult novel, *Taming the Star Runner* (1988). Travis, the main character, gets in trouble with the law for beating up his stepfather and is sent to live on his uncle's ranch. Underneath his tough and cool exterior, though, Travis is a talented writer who has already written a novel and sent it to a publisher. Many scenes from the book, particularly when Travis first meets the publisher, are considered autobiographical echoes of Hinton's own awkwardness as a teenage writer. Patty Campbell comments on the similarity of this novel to Hinton's earlier works, saying "The pattern is familiar, but her genius lies in that she has been able to give each of the five protagonists she has drawn from the mythic model a unique voice and a unique story."



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NEW BOOKS FOR YOUNGER READERS

Hinton's most recent book, *Big David, Little David* (1994), is a different kind of book for her. This illustrated book is written for younger readers, those aged four to eight. It's the story of a little boy who becomes confused when he starts school and meets another boy who looks just like his father. Her next book, a story for preteens called *The Puppy Sister,* is scheduled to be published in fall 1995.

Hinton receives many fan letters from her readers, who write to tell her how much her books have meant to them. With 15 million copies sold to date, Hinton's novels continue to speak to a contemporary audience. Today, according to critic Patty Campbell, Hinton has achieved "almost mythical status as the grand dame of young adult novelists."

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Hinton met her future husband, David E. Inhofe, at the University of Oklahoma when they sat next to each other in Freshman Biology. She and Inhofe, now a mail order businessman, married in 1970. They have one child, Nicholas, born in 1983. Except for a few months in Spain shortly after their wedding and a few years in California in the early 1970s while David was in graduate school, Hinton has lived in or just outside Tulsa, Oklahoma, for her whole life.

FAVORITE BOOKS AND AUTHORS

"My favorite reading includes a lot of history and biography. My favorite novels are *Fire from Heaven* by Mary Renault, *Kristin Lavransdatter* by Sigrid Undset, *Emma* by Jane Austen, and *The Haunting of Hill House* by Shirley Jackson. Now that I look at this list I realize that all are character studies. And it's obvious that I read better than I write."

HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS

"My favorite pastimes (besides reading)," Hinton writes, "are horseback riding (I show hunters), swimming, and taking long walks—fun things to do with others, but just as fun alone."

"I like cats, lemons, looking at views. I don't like sweets, games, TV, giving speeches, air travel, or *writing about myself.* Unfortunately, the last three seem to be included in the job. When I got started I thought all a novelist had to do was write novels. But I was young. . . ."

WRITINGS

The Outsiders, 1967
That Was Then, This is Now, 1971

Rumble Fish, 1975
Tex, 1979
Taming the Star Runner, 1988
Big David, Little David, 1994

HONORS AND AWARDS

Best Teenage Books (*New York Herald Tribune*): 1967
Best Books for Young Adults (American Library Association): 1971, for *That Was Then, This Is Now*; 1975, for *Rumble Fish*; 1979, for *Tex*
Maxi Award (*Media & Methods*): 1975
Best Books of the Year (*School Library Journal*): 1975, for *Rumble Fish*; 1979, for *Tex*
Golden Archer Award: 1983
Young Adult Author Award (*School Library Journal*/American Library Association): 1988

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Daly, Jay. *Presenting S.E. Hinton*, 1987
Gallo, Donald R., ed. *Speaking for Ourselves: Autobiographical Sketches by Notable Authors of Books for Young Adults*, 1990
Montreville, Doris de, and Elizabeth D. Crawford, eds. *Fourth Book of Junior Authors & Illustrators*, 1978
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Twentieth-Century Children's Writers, 1989
Weiss, M. Jerry. *From Writers to Students: The Pleasures and Pains of Writing*, 1979
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World Book Encyclopedia, 1994

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New York Times, Mar. 20, 1983, Section II, p.19; Mar. 23, 1983, p.C19
New York Times Book Review, Aug. 27, 1967, p.26; Apr. 2, 1989, p.26
Newsweek, Oct. 11, 1982, p.105
Teen, July 1982, p.46

ADDRESS

Bantam-Doubleday-Dell
1540 Broadway
New York, NY 10036-4094

M. E. Kerr 1927-

American Writer for Young Adults
Author of *Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack!*, *Gentlehands*, and *Night Kites*

BIRTH

M. E. Kerr's real name is Marijane Meaker. She was born in Auburn, New York, on May 27, 1927, the middle child and only daughter of Ellis and Ida Meaker. Her two brothers were Ellis Jr., who was older, and Charles, who was 12 years younger. Her father owned a company that manufactured mayonnaise.

YOUTH

"I grew up always wanting to be a writer," Kerr admits. Throughout her childhood, her father was a fine example for her. He read

everything he could find, from classic novels to popular magazines. He also kept a journal faithfully, and encouraged Kerr to record her own thoughts and experiences as well. Like her father, Kerr loved to spend time at the local library, and the librarians often had to kick her out at closing time. Her mother also influenced Kerr in her early years by teaching her that fiction "spins off grandly from fact." "My mother was a *stunning* gossip," Kerr recalls. "She began every conversation with 'Wait until you hear this . . . .'" Kerr sometimes accompanied her mother on drives around town—checking out who went to the movies with whom, who sat together at the local bar, and whose cars were parked behind women's apartments. She acknowledges that the way her mother structured her stories—to increase interest and suspense—helped in her writing career. "I think it was the combination of my father reading all the time that got me interested in reading, and my mother's gossiping that made me a writer," Kerr says.

Kerr's teen years were typically difficult, especially since it seemed that her parents paid much more attention to her two brothers. "Twelve was the age I was when my baby brother was born, and my older brother went off to military school," Kerr notes. "I was suddenly nothing, sandwiched between two stars." She resented the fact that her parents coddled the baby and fawned over the young cadet in his fancy uniform. As a result, Kerr ended up spending a lot of time alone in her room, writing stories, listening to music, and thinking about boys. Her mother encouraged her to take dancing lessons, but Kerr soon discovered that "dancing was not one of my gifts."

EDUCATION

After she had attended the public high school in her town for a while, Kerr was sent away to Stuart Hall, an all-girls' Episcopal boarding school in Virginia, when she was 16. She faced strict rules at her new school and rebelled against them. "I was always sort of an outcast in school because I was so much trouble," she admits. In fact, she was suspended during her senior year for throwing darts at pictures of the school's faculty. Boarding school did awaken her to social class differences, however, which would later factor into her writing. "I had always thought that my family was rich. I didn't realize, until I got to boarding school, that we weren't rich at all except in little Auburn," Kerr recalls. "When I got to boarding school and met children of heads of international corporations, and found out differences, I was very, very surprised. Since then I've always paid attention to haves and have-nots." During the summers, which she spent with her family at a cottage on a lake, she cranked out stories and sent them off to magazines. In order to appear more professional, she used her father's stationery—which was imprinted with the initials E.R.M.—and created her first pseudonym to match it, Eric Ranthram McKay.

After graduating from Stuart Hall in 1945, Kerr enrolled at Vermont Junior College for a year. "I felt like someone who'd been let out of prison," she says, comparing its relaxed, co-ed atmosphere to the rigid environment of boarding school. She enjoyed editing the school newspaper there, which published some of her first stories and articles. She transferred to the University of Missouri in 1946, despite her father's warnings that this decision would doom her to marry someone from Missouri. Since World War II had just ended, the campus was full of young soldiers returned from overseas. Kerr joined a sorority at the university, mostly because student housing was so limited. Even though she made many close friends there, she claims that "the sorority system, to my mind, is still one of the cruelest introductions to college life that I can imagine . . . . I tried to think of what it was sororities were saying to their members, and it seemed to me they were all saying not to be individuals, but to be as much like the group as possible."

At first she majored in journalism, but Kerr found that "I didn't want anything to do with writing fact. I wanted to make up my own facts. I wanted to do creative writing." Soon she switched her major to English. She graduated with a BA in English in 1949.

Kerr also met her first major love interest at the university. As it turned out, her parents disapproved of him even more than if he had been from Missouri. George was a Hungarian Jew who had "barely managed to escape the Nazis in his teens by being smuggled into Venezuela," Kerr recalls. By the time she met him, he was "an ardent Communist." Kerr joined the Communist party in college, and she agonized about whether to marry George and move with him to Venezuela. During that time, many people who were believed to be Communists were persecuted in the United States, so George eventually came under investigation by the FBI and was forced to leave the country. Kerr has always suspected that her parents tipped off the authorities about her boyfriend.

FIRST JOBS

Kerr moved to New York City in 1949 with hopes of becoming a writer. Instead, her first job was as a file clerk at Dutton Publishing Company. "I wasn't worth the 32 dollars [a week] Dutton paid me to file letters and answer phones and carry things from one floor to another," Kerr admits. "My own work came first with me. I was always sitting there scratching out short stories and poems." Dutton soon fired her for not doing her work, and she went on to be fired from "a series of flunkie jobs." She also continued writing stories, sending them off to magazines, and collecting rejection slips. At one point she even attended a masquerade party as a rejection slip, "wearing a black slip with rejections from all the magazines pinned to it," she remembers.

Kerr also continued experimenting with pseudonyms during this time. She printed up stationery with her real name on it, followed by the title "Literary Agent." Then she wrote letters from herself to accompany the stories she had written under various names, including those of her roommates. "My pseudonyms were my clients," she explains. Finally, in April 1951, she made her first major sale of a story to *Ladies' Home Journal* under the pseudonym Laura Winston. "The $750 from that sale launched me on my writing career," Kerr says. "I never worked at a full-time job again." In 1952, her first adult novel, *Spring Fire*, was published under the pseudonym Vin Packer and became a huge success, selling well over one million copies in paperback.

NAMING HERSELF

From the very earliest days of her writing career, Kerr has used a variety of assumed names. Sometimes she used pseudonyms because she felt her real name did not fit the subject matter of a particular book, and sometimes she simply wrote so much that she used pseudonyms to avoid overwhelming potential publishers. For the most part, however, she just liked the idea. "I grew up hearing about pseudonyms. The idea of a pen name really fascinated me," she says. Kerr is known to her friends by her real name, Marijane Meaker. She writes for young adults using the pen name M. E. Kerr—a play on her last name—and for children using the name Mary James. She published 20 suspense novels for adults under the pseudonym Vin Packer between 1952 and 1969, and she has also written for adults as M. J. Meaker and Ann Aldrich. "I just like to name myself, it's the only time you can. You walk around with your father's name or your husband's name. You never get a chance to name yourself," Kerr explains. "In fact, sometimes when I speak to kids, I try to get them to name themselves. You'd be surprised by how many kids really would have liked to have been able to."

BECOMING A YOUNG-ADULT WRITER

Kerr began her career writing adult fiction and nonfiction, though many of her books featured teenaged characters. It was not until the early 1970s, when the field of young-adult literature was just becoming popular, that she decided to write for a younger audience. "Louise Fitzhugh, who wrote *Harriet the Spy*, kept telling me about this young adult field," Kerr recalls. "And she said, 'You always write about kids,' which was true. I wrote a lot about kids. They were often the protagonists in my books . . . but at the time, I thought I could never write for that age. Then, as I was looking this field over, I came upon *Pigman*, by Paul Zindel. And I thought, 'Wow, you know, that doesn't stoop. It's a regular book!' I was thrilled with *Pigman*, so I thought I would try something."

Kerr was surprised to find that as soon as she began writing for young adults, vivid memories of her own teen years came flooding back to her. "I realized I had stories in me about *me*—no longer disguised as a homicidal maniac, or a twisted criminal bent on a scam, but as the small-town kid I'd been, so typically American and middle class and yes, vulnerable, but not as tragic and complicated as I used to imagine," Kerr reveals. These memories helped her to express the feelings and problems of young adults in a realistic way. Over the years, she says that she has found the field of young-adult literature very rewarding. She particularly enjoys connecting with her audience by speaking at schools and receiving letters. "When I write for young adults I know they're still wrestling with very important problems like winning and losing, not feeling accepted or accepting, prejudice, love—all the things adults ultimately get hardened to, and forgetful of. I know my audience hasn't yet made up their minds about everything, that they're still vulnerable and open to suggestion and able to change their minds," Kerr explains. "Give me that kind of audience any day!"

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

For over 20 years, Kerr has been writing successful and award-winning novels for young adults. Her first, *Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack!*, was originally published in 1972, and it remains popular today. She came up with the idea for the book while volunteering as a writing teacher in a "very rough" high school in New York City. She describes the teenagers she met there as "wild, unruly, wonderful kids who didn't give a fig about reading, but who responded to writing assignments with great vigor and originality." One of the most impressive writers in the class was an overweight girl known as Tiny. "Tiny's mother was an ardent do-gooder who worked with her small church helping drug addicts," Kerr explains. At home, Tiny did nothing but sit in front of the television and eat, because her mother was too busy helping others to pay attention to her. In *Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack!*, Kerr transformed Tiny into Dinky, who spreads the rumor that she does drugs in order to get her parents to notice her. Kerr attributes the book's continuing popularity to its universal theme, "the idea of parents putting the fire out in the house across the street when their own house is on fire." The book has been banned from several school districts, mostly due to objections about its title, but Kerr feels that the title has actually added to the book's appeal for young adults.

Another of Kerr's most popular books, *Gentlehands* (1978), is also considered somewhat controversial. It tells the story of Buddy Boyle, an average 16-year-old from a working-class background who manages to win the heart of a beautiful and wealthy girl, Skye Pennington. Buddy's life falls apart, however, when a reporter exposes the fact that his grandfather was once a guard in a Nazi concentration camp. Many reviewers of the

book complained about the way Kerr portrayed the grandfather—he is handsome, charming, and the last person readers would expect to have been a brutal killer. But Kerr claims that she intentionally made the character nice in order to make a point. "I was trying to provoke the idea that we like to distance ourselves from evil," she explains. "During World War II, we were taught the Japanese were animals. We were taught the Germans were buffoons. Instead, I've always liked the idea that we recognize evil in ourselves when we portray evil." Kerr says that *Gentlehands* poured out of her typewriter and was completed in about six weeks (compared to her usual four or five months), making it the easiest to write among her many books.

In contrast, Kerr says that *Little Little* (1981) was the hardest book for her to write—she started it over and over again for several years, trying to achieve the right tone, before she finally finished it—but it also turned out to be one of her favorites. She based the book on the experience of a young family in her hometown. "The golden boy of our town went to Harvard and came back with a wife," Kerr recalls. "They were everybody's idea of the marvelous young couple. And then they had a child who was a midget. This always had me fascinated: watching them cope." After the couple joined the Little People of America, an association for dwarfs, the town experienced what Kerr calls "an invasion of little people" every summer. *Little Little* is basically a love story about two teenaged dwarfs, but it also provides a sensitive picture of the daily challenges faced by people with physical disabilities.

When Kerr wrote *Night Kites* in 1984, the AIDS crisis was just beginning, and few people expected it to spread far or last long. "I thought either the disease would change, which it hasn't, or they would find a cure for it, which they haven't," Kerr explains. She was moved to write the novel by a popular young man from her community who contracted AIDS and came home to die. The entire town seemed to turn against his family—even the caterers refused to come to their

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annual Christmas party—because people did not understand and were frightened of the disease. In *Night Kites*, high-school senior Erick Rudd is on an emotional roller-coaster. He falls in love and has his first sexual experience, then finds out that his older brother has AIDS. Although the book was published before such topics as condoms and "safe sex" were discussed openly, Kerr still provides a heart-rending portrait of a family's struggles to cope with the death of a son and the social stigma associated with AIDS.

Kerr has written many other important and popular books for young adults. *Is That You, Miss Blue?* (1975), another of her own favorites, tells the story of a young teacher who becomes the object of cruel jokes because of her deep religious beliefs. *Love Is a Missing Person*, also published in 1975, deals with the issue of interracial dating. In order to answer some of her readers' frequently asked questions, she also wrote an entertaining autobiography about her teen years, *Me, Me, Me, Me, Me: Not a Novel*, in 1983. In the late 1980s, Kerr began to concentrate on the *Fell* books, a series of suspenseful novels about amateur detective John Fell and his adventures at prep school. These include *Fell* (1987), *Fell Back* (1989), and *Fell Down* (1991). "I thought it would be nice to have this sort of recess yarn in between serious novels," Kerr explains. "So that's why I invented [Fell], as a sort of escape hatch."

When Kerr is working on a book, she writes every day from 1:00 P.M. to about 7:00 or 8:00. She describes herself as a "night owl," and admits that she rarely goes to bed earlier than 3:00 A.M. In between books, she usually does other things and waits for new ideas to form. "If I don't have an idea, I don't work, because I don't think motion is work," Kerr notes.

THE NATURE OF HER POPULARITY

"M. E. Kerr is widely considered to be among the top five authors of young adult literature," one reviewer states. "Her enduring popularity stems from the fact that her books deal with realistic topics in a humorous and never condescending manner. . . . Her books appeal to a broad spectrum of readers because of her brilliant use of humor, irony, strong characterizations, and interesting plots." Most of Kerr's books revolve around a current social issue, such as drug addiction, mental illness, physical disability, or racism. She places these issues within well-developed plots that hold readers' interest, and she creates characters that young adults can identify with. Many of her characters are outsiders, or feel different than their friends. "I think my sympathies are usually with the underdog, the outlaw character, the misfit. I've always identified more with those people," Kerr explains. "I don't think there are any kids in high school who don't in some way feel that they don't measure up, because that's the time when they first go out and start comparing themselves with other kids."

Kerr intentionally tries to write stories that boys will enjoy as much as girls. She contends that a lot of the current young-adult literature is geared toward girls, and she worries that this trend might discourage boys from reading. "It became clear to me that with the reading problem in this country," Kerr notes, "to get boys to read, and to get teachers to use my books in the classrooms, and so forth, I had to give them something that would interest boys. Girls like to read stories about boys. Girls don't care if there's a boy and a girl on the cover. Boys just want boys on the cover. Someone told me that boys are beginning to consider reading effeminate . . . . That's the age when they're very self-conscious. So I decided that I would try to interest boys. It is sort of a challenge to have this audience that doesn't want to read you." Kerr also attributes her popularity to the fact that she writes about what she knows. For example, many of her books are set in fictional Seaville, New York, which is a resort town much like her home in East Hampton, Long Island. Several other books take place in Cayuta, New York, which resembles her childhood hometown of Auburn in the Finger Lakes region of the state.

Kerr has won many awards for her writing over the years. Her books have regularly appeared on the "Best Books of the Year" lists put out by the American Library Association, *School Library Journal*, and the *New York Times*. She also won a Christopher Award in 1979 for *Gentlehands*, and a Golden Kite Award from the Society of Children's Book Writers in 1981 for *Little Little*. In 1993, Kerr received the Margaret A. Edwards Award for her lifetime achievement in the field of young adult literature. The citation for the award praises her books for providing young adults with "a window through which they can view the world, and which will help them to grow and understand themselves and their role in society."

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Kerr makes her home in East Hampton, New York. Since her town is outside the literary mainstream, she founded a writers' workshop in order to meet with other authors in her community. Kerr never married or had children of her own, and she claims that this has given her an advantage in writing for young adults. "Not having kids has helped. I have no children to compare myself with right in front of me that are my flesh and blood, so my teenage memories stay very clear to me because of that. I have only one childhood to keep track of and that's mine. I think that gives you a clearer picture."

HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS

"I have few interests that aren't related to writing," Kerr says. "When I'm 'stuck' between novels, I mostly read, walk by the ocean, and complain that I can't work to other writers." She also enjoys watching television and going to the movies.

SELECTED WRITINGS

FOR YOUNG ADULTS, UNDER PSEUDONYM M. E. KERR

Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack!, 1972
If I Love You, Am I Trapped Forever?, 1973
The Son of Someone Famous, 1974
Is That You, Miss Blue?, 1975
Love Is a Missing Person, 1975
I'll Love You When You're More Like Me, 1977
Gentlehands, 1978
Little Little, 1981
What I Really Think of You, 1982
Me, Me, Me, Me, Me: Not a Novel, 1983
Him She Loves?, 1984
I Stay Near You, 1985
Night Kites, 1986
Fell, 1987
Fell Back, 1989
Fell Down, 1991
Linger, 1993
Deliver Us from Evie, 1994

FOR CHILDREN, UNDER PSEUDONYM MARY JAMES

Shoebag, 1990

FOR ADULTS, UNDER PSEUDONYM VIN PACKER

Spring Fire, 1952
Dark Intruder, 1952
Look Back to Love, 1953
Come Destroy Me, 1954
Whisper His Sin, 1954
The Thrill Kids, 1955
Dark Don't Catch Me, 1956
The Young and Violent, 1956
Three-Day Terror, 1957
The Evil Friendship, 1958
5:45 to Suburbia, 1958
The Twisted Ones, 1959
The Damnation of Adam Blessing, 1961
The Girl on the Best Seller List, 1961
Something in the Shadows, 1961
Intimate Victims, 1962
Alone at Night, 1963
The Hare in March, 1967
Don't Rely on Gemini, 1969

HONORS AND AWARDS

Best Books for Young Adults (American Library Association): 1972, for *Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack!*; 1975, for *Is That You, Miss Blue?*; 1983, for *Me, Me, Me, Me, Me: Not a Novel*; 1985, for *I Stay Near You*; 1986, for *Night Kites*

Best Books (*School Library Journal*): 1972, for *Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack!*; 1974, for *The Son of Someone Famous*; 1977, for *I'll Love You When You're More Like Me*; 1978, for *Gentlehands*; 1981, for *Little Little*; 1982, for *What I Really Think of You*; 1987, for *Night Kites*

Children's Spring Book Festival Honor Book (*Book World*): 1973, for *If I Love You, Am I Trapped Forever?*

Children's Books of the Year (Child Study Association of America): 1973, for *If I Love You, Am I Trapped Forever?*

Outstanding Books of the Year (*New York Times*): 1973, for *If I Love You, Am I Trapped Forever?*; 1975, for *Is That You, Miss Blue?*; 1978, for *Gentlehands*

Maxi Award (*Media and Methods*): 1974, for *Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack!*

Christopher Award: 1979, for *Gentlehands*

Books for the Teen Age (New York Public Library): 1980 and 1981, for *Gentlehands*; 1982, for *Little Little*

Golden Kite Award for Fiction (Society of Children's Book Writers): 1981, for *Little Little*

Margaret A. Edwards Award for Lifetime Achievement (*School Library Journal*): 1993, for *Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack!, Gentlehands, Me, Me, Me, Me, Me: Not a Novel*, and *Night Kites*

FURTHER READING

BOOKS

Contemporary Authors, New Revision Series, Vol. 37

Fourth Book of Junior Authors and Illustrators, 1978

Kerr, M. E. *Me, Me, Me, Me, Me: Not a Novel*, 1983

Nilson, Alleen Pace. *Presenting M. E. Kerr*, 1986

Rees, David. *Painted Desert, Green Shade: Essays on Contemporary Writers of Fiction for Children and Young Adults*, 1984

Something about the Author Autobiography Series, Vol. 1

Twentieth-Century Children's Writers, 1983

Weiss, M. Jerry, ed. *From Writers to Students: The Pleasures and Pains of Writing*, 1979

PERIODICALS

Journal of Youth Services in Libraries, Fall 1993, p. 25

School Library Journal, June 1993, p. 24

VOYA, Feb. 1991, p. 337

ADDRESS

HarperCollins Publishers
10 East 53rd Street
New York NY 10022

Stephen King 1947-
American Novelist, Short Story Writer, and Screenwriter
Author of *Carrie*, *The Stand*, and *The Shining*

BIRTH

Stephen Edwin King was born in Portland, Maine, on September 21, 1947, to Donald Edwin King, a merchant marine, and Nellie Ruth Pillsbury King. His brother, David, was adopted as an infant in 1945.

YOUTH

King had an unsettled and difficult youth. His father deserted the family when Stephen was two years old, leaving his mother, Ruth,

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to fend for herself and their two sons. At first, Ruth shuffled the boys from one relative's house to another, picking up odd jobs. They settled in Stratford, Connecticut, when Stephen was six years old.

King was attracted to scary stories early. His introduction came from his mother. She read aloud to Stephen and his brother from the comic book series "Classics Illustrated" and *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson. She loved to read, too. Once, he became curious about a thin, plain "grown-up" book, and asked her about it. "Oh, you wouldn't like this one," she told him. "This one's a scary one. It's about a man who changes into something else. It's called *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*." That did not faze him, even at seven years old. "Read it to me," he said. Reluctantly she agreed. Afterwards, with images from the book fresh in his mind, he thought, "I have to do that, but I have to do that worse." Against her wishes, Stephen listened to a radio show adapted from Ray Bradbury's story, "Mars Is Heaven!" Afterwards, he recalled sleeping "in the doorway, where the real and rational light of the bathroom bulb could shine on my face." Still at seven, he saw his first horror movie, *Creature from the Black Lagoon*. And, he wrote his first story. Not surprisingly, it was a tale about a dinosaur that terrorizes a town.

When King was ten, he was in a theater watching *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers* when the movie was interrupted with the announcement that the Soviet Union had launched the satellite "Sputnik." People were shocked. The Russian satellite, which was the first satellite to orbit the Earth, beat the U.S. into space. Relations between the countries, already tense, became more hostile. In the early 1960s, nuclear weapons sat poised on both sides, and the threat of nuclear war loomed. King felt "terribly frightened, alone, and depressed." He longed for a release from the fear.

King's family moved to Durham, Maine, when he was 11 years old. With meager finances, they managed to rent a two-story house with a blue outhouse in the backyard. When well water ran dry, he would haul water from a nearby spring. For a hot bath, he walked a half mile to his aunt's house, even in freezing temperatures. While Ruth King worked long hours, Stephen and his brother amused themselves by going to the movies. They liked the scary ones best. These shows inspired King to write. One matinee, *The Pit and the Pendulum*, moved him so much that he wrote his own version and passed copies of it to his friends. Movies helped develop his unique writing style: "I write down everything I see. It seems like a movie, and I write that way."

In Durham, King went through an awkward adolescence. He was overweight and uncoordinated, remembered for having his nose buried in a book. His unkempt hair, black horn-rimmed glasses, and large size, at six-feet-two-inches, made him stand out. But he did not let that bother him. He later told an interviewer, "I could write, and that was the way I defined myself, even as a kid."

While rummaging through his aunt and uncle's attic, King discovered that his father had read horror stories. In an old box of his father's books, he found a collection by H.P. Lovecraft, one of the first noted horror writers. Like King, Lovecraft was from New England, and he set his stories there. King realized that he, too, could establish his stories in the place he knew best—Maine. Also, he learned that his father had submitted fiction to magazines, though his work had not been published.

EARLY MEMORIES

Ruth King had a huge influence on her son's later success, as he explains here. "[My mother] was a very hardheaded person when it came to success," recalls King. "She knew what it was like to be on her own without an education, and she was determined that David and I would go to college. 'You're not going to punch a time clock all your life,' she told us. She always told us that dreams and ambitions can cause bitterness if they're not realized, and she encouraged me to submit my writings. [At college] she'd send us $5 nearly every week for spending money. After she died, I found she had frequently gone without meals to send that money we'd so casually accepted. It was very unsettling."

EDUCATION

King's elementary education included schools in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and Stratford, Connecticut. He completed the sixth grade in a one-room schoolhouse near his home in Durham, Maine. In the fall of 1962, he entered Lisbon High School in nearby Lisbon Falls. In high school, he was an above average student, with the exception of C's and D's in chemistry and physics, and he made the honor roll twice. After school, he played left tackle on the football team and played rhythm guitar in a rock band.

King's writing efforts continued as a staff writer for the school newspaper, working his way up to an editor by his junior year. He produced duplicate copies of stories, books, and newspapers with his brother, his friends, and by himself. At the same time, he was absorbing everyday life in Durham. Later, Durham would provide the basis for his fictional small Maine communities, like Derry and Castle Rock. The Harmony Grove Cemetery where King "ran among the markers" would return as Harmony Hill Cemetery in *Salem's Lot*. Two girls he knew in school would blend together to become the character of Carrie. A dead body that was pulled from a nearby lake after a boating accident reappeared in the novella "The Body," and in its film adaptation, *Stand By Me*.

By the time King graduated from high school in 1966, he had written a number of works: a short story, "The Star Invaders," about aliens from another planet; the story, "I Was a Teenage Grave Robber," that was

published in a horror magazine; and a novel, *The Aftermath*, a story of life after an atomic explosion. Biographer George Beahm wrote that these works "proved that even as a teenager, King's storytelling skills were firmly in place, providing a firm foundation for the work to follow."

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE

King earned a scholarship to the University of Maine in Orono and began his freshman year in the fall of 1966. He majored in English. College provided a proving ground for him to test his skills. His composition professor was impressed, and observed: "King always had a paperback in his pocket, and he knew all these authors that nobody else ever heard of." In the fall of his sophomore year, King asked his American literature professor, Burton Hatlen, to read the finished manuscript for *The Long Walk*. In the book, a group of boys set off from northern Maine toward the south on a kind of "walk-til-you-drop" competition, until only one survivor remains. Hatlen couldn't put it down. He was amazed at the "fully developed sense of narrative and pace." Also that fall, King made his first professional sale with the short story, "The Glass Floor." The story sold to *Startling Mystery Stories* for $35.

In his senior year, King began selling some of his short stories to men's magazines. He had also written several novels by this time, including two, *Rage* and *The Long Walk*, that were published years later. A column, "King's Garbage Truck," for *The Maine Campus*, provided an outlet for his observations and reflections. Also, he met his future wife, Tabitha Spruce, a poet and short story writer. On June 5, 1970, King graduated from college with a B.S. in English, and a certification to teach high school.

FIRST JOBS

After graduation, King pumped gas at a service station and pressed sheets at a laundry while looking for a teaching job. In 1971, King married Tabitha Spruce. That same year, the local high school, Hampden Academy, hired him to teach English. His salary was $6,400 per year. The couple set up housekeeping in a trailer; his writing was relegated to a few hours at night.

By 1972, he had written many stories and completed his fourth novel, *The Running Man*, but he wasn't selling anything. Unpaid bills mounted. He started to write *Carrie*, the story of an unpopular high-school girl who possesses a special power—telekinesis—that allows her thoughts to destroy. "But after four pages, I thought it stank and threw it in the rubbish," he said. "I came home later and found Tabby had taken them out and left a note. 'Please keep going—it's good.' Since she's really stingy with her praise, I did."

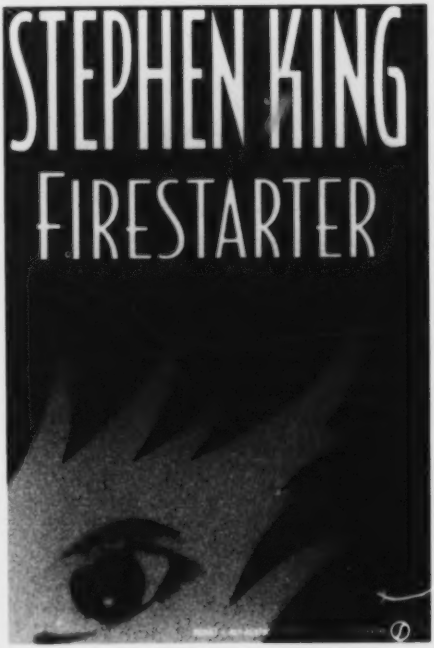
King submitted the manuscript for *Carrie* to an editor at Doubleday & Company in New York. In March 1973, Tabby called him at school. She was

so excited she could barely read the telegram he had just received: "CARRIE OFFICIALLY A DOUBLEDAY BOOK. $2500 ADVANCE AGAINST ROYALTIES. CONGRATS, KID—THE FUTURE LIES AHEAD."

In May, the paperback rights for *Carrie* were purchased by New American Library for $400,000. King would finally have the income to pursue his dream—to write full time. "*Carrie* was a kind of escape hatch for Tabby and me, and we were able to flee through it into a totally different existence," King said. With some regrets, he left teaching after only two years. The year of 1973 ended on a sad note when King's mother died. She did not live to see the publication of his first book.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Since *Carrie* first appeared in 1974, King has published a total of 38 books, including 32 novels, three short story collections, two children's books, and a nonfiction book, *Danse Macabre* (1981). In addition to his books, he has written numerous short stories, contributions to literary collections, and four screenplays. While his tales are mostly horror, he weaves elements of fantasy, science fiction, and humor into them, too. King is particularly acclaimed as a masterful storyteller. In his works, the plots take on more importance than the themes, settings, and other story elements. In addition, his books are known for their page-turning readability, unforgettable characters, and powerful, remarkable imagery.



Like *Carrie*, many of King's books deal with demonic and paranormal events, including *The Shining* (1977), about a family's destruction by an old hotel that possesses evil, supernatural powers. *The Dead Zone* (1979) follows a schoolteacher who is tormented by his ability to predict the future. *Firestarter* (1980) is the story of an eight-year-old girl who can set fires by focusing her mind. In *Christine* (1983), King tells the tale of a haunted 1958 Plymouth Fury that takes control of a teenage boy. King also writes fantasy/horror stories, including *Salem's Lot*

(1975), a tale set in a small Maine community overridden by vampires; *The Stand* (1978), about the loss of most of the U.S. population from a deadly superflu; *Pet Sematary* (1983), set in a Maine town where a burial ground restores life; and *The Dark Tower Trilogy* (1993), which features Roland, the last gunslinger, in a strange world without time. Other notable works include *IT* (1986), which depicts the lives of seven "outcasts" and their struggle with a supernatural entity that transforms itself into their worst fears; *The Talisman* (1984), co-authored with Peter Straub, in which a young man searches alternative universes for a magical charm; and *Eyes of the Dragon* (1984), a fantasy that he wrote for his daughter, Naomi, set in the mythical kingdom of Delain.

King's work is frequently adapted for audio cassettes and movies. The best of these movies provides the same gripping horror and suspense as his written work and has brought even more fans to his books. Some of the popular films include the top-grossing *Carrie* (1976), starring Sissy Spacek as the destructive high-school girl; *The Shining* (1980), a riveting and haunting psychological tale directed by Stanley Kubrick and starring Jack Nicholson; *Stand By Me* (1986), an adaptation of King's novella "The Body" and a moving portrayal of friendship among children; *Misery* (1990), a spellbinding thriller starring James Caan and Kathy Bates, who earned an Oscar for her frightening portrayal; and the recent television mini-series, *The Langoliers* (1995), a tale of 10 airline passengers awakened to find that they are the last living humans.

RICHARD BACHMAN

In 1977, King began to publish under the pseudonym, or pen name, of Richard Bachman. For the incredibly prolific King, using an alternative name offered an additional outlet for his numerous book ideas. His first novel as Bachman was *Rage* (1977), the story of a high school senior who is outraged at his brutal father, kills two teachers, and then convinces most of his classmates that he is a hero. Over a period of eight years, King wrote four more novels as Bachman until people identified his writing style, and he dropped the pseudonym.

Tragically, in January 1993, an angry 17-year-old honors student from Kentucky read King's book, *Rage*, and apparently sympathized with the fictional character, Charlie Decker. In a scene painfully similar to the book, he shot and killed a teacher and the school custodian, then taunted his classmates until police arrived.

KING'S INCREDIBLE SUCCESS

The public response to King's work has been overwhelming. His fans are so loyal that they quickly snap up each new offering. Nearly 100 million copies of his work remain in print worldwide. Two to five of his titles have

appeared on the *New York Times* bestseller lists at the same time, and some have remained on the paperback bestseller list for more than a decade. Many of his books have broken records for the number of copies printed. And, of course, such sales have been extremely lucrative: his recent contract earned him a reported $30 million for just four books. With such incredible success, he has been called the most popular author of horror fiction of all time.

King's success as an author rests on his depiction of horror. His stories make us face our worst fears, born of his own fear of the dark, elevators, funerals, cancer, heart attacks—the list is long. As King himself explains it, he is "horrified by the world, and the response is to get it all out in fiction." "[King has] depicted the struggle of an American culture to face the horrors within it," explained Gary Williams Crawford in *Discovering Stephen King*. "He has shown the nightmare of our idealistic civilization."

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

On January 2, 1971, King took a morning off from his job pressing sheets to marry Tabitha Jane Spruce. "We got married on a Saturday because the laundry was closed on Saturday afternoons . . . but I still was docked for not being there Saturday morning." They have three children: Naomi, 24, Joseph, 22, and Owen, 18. They live in their home state of Maine, dividing their time between their restored Victorian home in Bangor and a lakefront home near the New Hampshire border.

ADVICE FOR YOUNG WRITERS

"Don't write your novel with bestseller lists or movie companies or rich paperback houses in mind," King suggests. "Don't, in fact, even write it with publication in mind. Write it for yourself."

SELECTED WRITINGS

NOVELS

Carrie, 1974
Salem's Lot, 1975
The Shining, 1977
The Stand, 1978
The Dead Zone, 1979
Firestarter, 1980
Cujo, 1981
Creepshow, 1982
Christine, 1983
Pet Sematary, 1983
The Eyes of the Dragon, 1984 (juvenile)

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The Talisman, 1984 (with Peter Straub)
Cycle of the Werewolf, 1985
IT, 1986
Maximum Overdrive, 1986
Misery, 1987
Tommyknockers, 1987
Nightmares in the Sky, 1988
Night Visions, 1988
The Dark Half, 1989
Four Past Midnight, 1990
Needful Things, 1991
Dolores Claiborne, 1992
Gerald's Game, 1992
The Dark Tower Trilogy, 1993
Nightmares and Dreamscapes, 1993
Insomnia, 1994
Rose Madder, 1995

NOVELS UNDER PSEUDONYM RICHARD BACHMAN

Rage, 1977
The Long Walk, 1979
Roadwork, 1981
The Running Man, 1982
Thinner, 1984

OTHER

Night Shift, 1978 (short stories)
Danse Macabre, 1981 (nonfiction)
Creepshow, 1982 (screenplay)
Different Seasons, 1982 (short stories)
Cat's Eye, 1984 (screenplay)
Silver Bullet, 1985 (screenplay)
Skeleton Crew, 1985 (short stories)
Maximum Overdrive, 1986 (screenplay)

HONORS AND AWARDS

Book List (*School Library Journal*): 1975, for *Carrie*
Best Books for Young Adults (American Library Association): 1978, for *Salem's Lot*; 1979, for *The Long Walk*; 1981, for *Firestarter*
Best Fiction Writer of the Year (*Us* Magazine): 1982
British Fantasy Award (British Fantasy Society): 1982, for *Cujo*
Hugo Award (World Science Fiction Convention): 1982, for *Danse Macabre*
Locus Award for Best Collection (Locus Publications): 1986, for *Skeleton Crew*

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Cosmopolitan, Dec. 1985, p.112
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ADDRESS

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Gary Larson 1950-
American Cartoonist
Creator of the Award-Winning Cartoon
"The Far Side"

BIRTH

Gary Larson was born on August 14, 1950, in Tacoma, Washington, to Verner Larson, a Chrysler dealer, and Doris Larson, a secretary for the American Plywood Association. He has an older brother, Dan.

YOUTH

Larson's childhood revolved around two pastimes: animals, which he searched for in the lush surroundings of Tacoma where he grew up, and escapades with his brother. A neighborhood swamp

teemed with life, and he explored it all, taking home snakes, salamanders, lizards, and toads. He hunted tadpoles and newts in drainage ditches, and collected tarantulas, iguanas, pigeons, small alligators, and praying mantises. For a month, he kept a pet monkey. He and Dan filled the backyard with water to create a swamp and transformed the basement into the Mojave Desert with sand. Later, Gary raised and bred snakes. "A garter snake almost disappeared into the davenport one time," his mother told an interviewer. "I caught it just as it was vanishing into the cushions. And another time a boa constrictor got wrapped in my sewing machine."

After school, before their parents came home from work, Gary became his brother's slave. The most frightful times were when he had to go to the basement for firewood. "And so down I'd go," he remembers. "My task nearly completed, I would begin my quick ascent back to the world of the living. And then, it would happen. With an audible click, followed by sinister laughter, the lights would go off. From the other side, where the light switch was controlled, I would hear my older brother's voice begin to chant: 'It's coming for you, Gary! It's coming! Do you hear it? Do you hear it breathing, Gary?'"

Larson picked up a sense of humor early. When his mother woke him for his second day of kindergarten, he asked, "What, again?" His favorite book was *Mr. Bear Squash-You-All-Flat*, about a bear who terrorizes small animals in the woods by sitting on their houses and squashing them. He begged his mother to read him that book over and over again.

The idea of becoming a cartoonist never entered Larson's mind. He loved to draw as a child, but did not take any special art classes. His favorite subject was animals. Books about the jungle, such as Edgar Rice Burrough's Tarzan books and the Mowgli books by Rudyard Kipling, stirred his imagination. "My friends would sit around and draw tanks and airplanes, and I used to envy them, because I could never draw them that well. But I could out-do them when it came to whales and giraffes."

EARLY MEMORIES

"When I was a little kid I spent a lot of time by myself, living in my own little world," Larson recalls. "I could go off some place and turn over a rock and sit and stare at the world underneath it for hours. I still live inside my head an awful lot."

EDUCATION

Science was Larson's favorite subject in school. He took as many science courses as he could fit in his schedule at Curtis Senior High School in Tacoma, where he graduated in 1968. At Washington State University in

Pullman, he continued taking courses in ornithology (birds), entomology (insects), vertebrate and invertebrate zoology (animals with and without backbones), anthropology (origin of humans), and archaeology (past civilizations). He did not major in science because he did not know what he would do with a science degree, and teaching did not appeal to him. Also, he has said that a fear of physics kept him away. Instead, he majored in communications with an eye toward "saving the world from mundane commercials." Larson graduated from Washington State University in 1972 with a degree in communications.

FIRST JOBS

Larson dabbled in a series of jobs before breaking into cartooning. For the first three years, he played the banjo in a duo with a friend, Tom Howard. They called themselves "Tom and Gary," a band, he said, that was "as exciting as its name." Larson was too shy to enjoy the limelight, positioning himself with his face away from the audience at the various clubs they played. A sales job at a music store suited him better, but not for long. He took a few days off from the job and drew cartoons. A local nature magazine, *Pacific Search*, now titled *Pacific Northwest*, bought six of his cartoons for $90. "I immediately quit my job," he recalls. "I thought I was a cartoonist. Wrong!" For two months he labored over cartoons that did not sell. In 1978, he took a "real" job as an animal cruelty inspector for the Seattle Humane Society. On his way to the interview he hit a dog—the last straggler in a pack of mutts crossing the street. It was an unfortunate incident that journalists across the country later highlighted as a sort of unexpected twist in the origins of "Far Side" humor. Larson did not appreciate the connection. "People hear about that and they think that these kinds of things happen to me all the time," he said. "I'm the kind of person who will swerve off the road to avoid hitting a small *frog*."

Larson's first break came when he met a reporter from the *Seattle Times* during an investigation. She suggested that he show his cartoons to the *Times*. They began running his single-panel cartoon, "Nature's Way," every Saturday, paying him $15 a week. In the summer of 1979 during a vacation from the Humane Society, Larson took his portfolio to the *San Francisco Chronicle* and left it with the receptionist. As he explained in an autobiographical account in *The Prehistory of The Far Side: The Tenth Anniversary Exhibit*, the receptionist advised him "not to get his hopes up" or expect a personal interview. He had no place to go, so he spent the day in a phone booth, calling the receptionist every two to three hours. By the end of the second day, his vacation time running out, he decided to pick up his portfolio and go home. As he stood in the lobby, editor Stan Arnold, who has since retired, asked to speak to him on the phone, "Are you Gary Larson? You're sick! I loved 'em!" Arnold came out to the lobby and asked him to leave his portfolio so he could show it to the other

editors. He mentioned the prospect of syndication, publishing Larson's cartoons in numerous newspapers throughout the country. The receptionist pulled him aside afterwards and told him, "Mr. Arnold *never* comes out to the lobby for things like this! I've worked here 10 years and I've never seen him do that! He must think your work is very good."

When Larson returned home, he found a cancellation notice in the mailbox from the *Seattle Times* for "Nature's Way." Too many readers had complained about the "unnatural selection of the subject matter." Stan Arnold called him the next day and offered a five-year contract to syndicate his cartoon, which Arnold renamed "The Far Side." Larson has said that if the cancellation notice had arrived before his trip to San Francisco, he probably would have given up.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

On January 1, 1980, the first "Far Side" panel appeared in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. At that point, Larson only hoped to earn enough money to pay his rent. The panel was syndicated in 1984. Today, "Far Side" panels have become one of the 10 most-posted cartoons in the U.S. In 1991, he won the National Cartoonists Society's Reuben Award as "Outstanding Cartoonist of the Year," and in 1993, he won the Max & Moritz Prize from the International Comics Salon for the best international comic strip/panel. Larson has been called a genius; his cartoons are called "weird," "twisted," and "strange." The cartoon has struck a responsive chord in its fans because "it is a way of looking at the world," according to a newspaper account, "a peculiar . . . perspective that allows him to toy with the ordinary the way Superman toys with iron bars. . . . He built his career poking fun at the things he loved, including science and animals." To Larson, "it's a continual surprise that it's done as well as it has, because I do recognize that it's a little . . . *different*."

People wonder how he did it. Larson says that he did not set out to make a statement. His goal was to make his cartoons humorous and entertaining. The process was "basically sitting down at the drawing table and getting silly. I think very visually and I think a single panel lends itself to that one instant visual image . . . it all kind of comes to me at once. Sometimes a caption will hit me first, but that's rare. Usually it's the image that will come first, this one hideous moment that just lands on me."

There are no central characters in "The Far Side," as in "Garfield" and "Peanuts" cartoons. Yet the characters have become just as familiar and well-loved. Some of Larsen's favorites are cows, ducks, pigs, and snakes, offset by portly no-nonsense women and nerdy men and boys. Time-honored cartoon stand-bys such as desert islands, the devil, cavemen, and talking animals have been given a fresh approach. A duck, stranded on

an island with a scientist, his ship sinking in the background, says, "So, Professor Jenkins! . . . My old nemesis (enemy)! . . . We meet again, but this time the advantage is mine! Ha! Ha! Ha!" In another scene, an auditorium is filled with scientists in white lab coats listening to a speaker. Everyone in the room is holding a duck except one scientist with bulging eyes: "Suddenly Professor Liebowitz realizes he has come to the seminar without his duck." In another, two lice in a sparse forest of hairs stare at a sign showing the side view of a dog. Words printed over an arrow pointing to the dog's hind leg read, "You are here."

"Calm down, Edna . . . Yes, it's some giant, hideous insect . . . but it could be some giant, hideous insect in need of help."

TOUCHING A SCIENTIFIC NERVE

Nowhere are the "Far Side" animal cartoons more popular than in the scientific community. According to John McCosker, a scientist from the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco, Larson's cartoons are "displayed on at least as many lab files as kitchen refrigerators." Scientists like biologists and entomologists, who study living matter and insects, respectively, appreciate the humor. "He shares with (scientists) appreciation for things in nature that the . . . majority prefers to squash with a shoe," said McCosker.

The California Academy of Sciences "adopted" Larson and created "The Far Side of Science Gallery," an exhibition of more than 400 original "Far Side" cartoons. The exhibition has traveled to museums in Denver, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C., and is permanently housed at the Academy in San Francisco. It has attracted thousands of "Far Side" fans. In 1989, to honor Larson's contribution in biology, the Committee on Evolutionary Biology at the University of Chicago named a new insect species, a "chewing lice" found on owls, after him: *strigiphilus garylarsoni*. He received a similar honor in 1994. The newest of 300,000 known beetle species, described as a round beetle with furry suction cups on its six stout legs for scuttling upside-down, was named *beetle garylarsonus* by the Smithsonian Natural History Museum. One of scientists' favorites: A pith-helmeted scientist sits deep in a jungle, trying to eat. He blurts out, "What's this *Drosophila melanogaster* doing in my soup?" "That just cracks me up," admits one biologist.

ANIMAL LOVERS PROTEST

Despite the overwhelming success of "The Far Side," it's not for everyone. In 1984, animal lovers condemned the cartoon of a woman shouting out the window, "Here Fifi! C'mon! . . . Faster, Fifi!" to a dog racing up the sidewalk toward a swinging door. The dog's customary entry to the house, tightly barred with boards, promises sure disaster. Larson explained his intentions: "the reader is asked to accept the unacceptable—that the dog's own master (the standard heavy-set, matriarchal-type woman) is setting up her own dog for an unpleasant experience . . . or, if you don't buy that, then you get to see one of those miserable little dogs get 'bonked.'"

If Larson's work has inspired a single theme, according to James Kelly of *Time* magazine, it is "that man, for all his achievements, is just one species on earth, and not always the wisest or strongest one."

EARLY RETIREMENT

In 1988, Larson took 14 months off to avoid "burn-out" and study jazz guitar. Papers ran reruns. When he returned, he cut back from seven to

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five new cartoons a week. By taking the time off, Larson broke from a tradition in the cartooning business that an artist had an obligation to provide fresh "copy" every day. Garry Trudeau first broke that tradition in 1983 when he took more than a year off from his Doonesbury strip. Trudeau led the way for other cartoonists who, like Larson, believe that cartoonists need occasional periods of rest to stay fresh.

In December 1994, at the top of his career, Larson retired from cartooning. His last original work appeared on Sunday, January 1, 1995. At the time of his departure, Universal Press Syndicate (UPS) was publishing nearly 1,900 "Far Side" cartoons in daily and Sunday newspapers throughout the world. Its captions have been translated into 17 different languages. The cartoon was phenomenally successful. In 15 years, cartoon sales and related memorabilia—mugs, greeting cards, T-shirts—generated a reported $500 million. All but the first of 19 books of "Far Side" collections made the *New York Times* bestseller list; each book has sold a million copies. There are 28 million "Far Side" books in print in the U.S. and Canada alone. Each of the last nine editions of "The Far Side Off-the-Wall Calendar" has been the #1 bestseller in the U.S. for the year it was published. Also in October 1994, there was a "Far Side" Halloween special on television.

Larson's reasons for retiring, which he wrote in a personal letter to cartoon distributors, "mostly center around simple fatigue and a fear that if I continue for many more years my work will begin to suffer, or at the very least ease into the Graveyard of Mediocre Cartoons." Naturally disappointed, some fans thought he retired too soon. "It won't be the same in the mornings without 'The Far Side,'" said Amy Jo Martin, a Kansas City insurance adjuster. "He always made me look at the world with my head twisted sideways. I think he should reconsider because there's nobody left as weird as him." Although no new cartoons will be created some projects will continue, including "The Far Side" books, calendars, and greeting cards. "Of course, we are here for him if he ever yearns to resume the panel," said John P. McMeel, president of Universal Press Syndicate.

FUTURE PLANS

Before Larson's retirement, he played jazz guitar to relax. As cartooning began to lose its appeal, he became more interested in music. In the future, he plans to devote his time to studying and playing music.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

In September 1988, Larson married Toni Carmichael, an urban environmentalist and archaeologist. They live in Seattle, Washington, with their bull mastiff dog, Murray. Larson no longer breeds snakes, but in

the 1980s while still single, he kept up to 20 of them in cages in his apartment. In answer to astounded reporters wondering why he would have snakes as pets, he said, "[Snakes] are intriguing animals. Some people get into tropical fish or birds. It's like stamp collecting. The ones I have are some of the more colorful animals in the animal kingdom." He did not give them names—"that's a real anthropomorphic, or human-like, tendency. They don't respond to names. I think of them more from a biological standpoint. They're fascinating." Larson had to give up snakes when one mistook him for lunch.

MAJOR INFLUENCES

Among the cartoonists Larsen most admires are Don Martin of *Mad Magazine*, Gahan Wilson of *The New Yorker*, who also created an upside-down look at the world, and B. Kliban, the creator of cartoons of round-eyed tabby cats that became a $50-million craze in the mid-1980s.

HONORS AND AWARDS

Best Humor Panel (National Cartoonists Society): 1986
Best Syndicated Panel (National Cartoonists Society): 1985, 1987
Reuben Award (National Cartoonists Society): 1991 and 1995, for Outstanding Cartoonist of the Year
Max & Moritz Prize (International Comics Salon): 1993, for Best International Comic Strip/Panel

WRITINGS

The Far Side Gallery, 1980
The Far Side, 1982
Beyond the Far Side, 1983
In Search of the Far Side, 1984
Bride of the Far Side, 1985
It Came from the Far Side, 1985
Valley of the Far Side, 1985
Far Side Gallery 2, 1986
The Far Side Observer, 1987
Hound of the Far Side, 1987
Far Side Gallery 3, 1988
Night of the Crash-Test Dummies, 1988
The Prehistory of the Far Side: A Tenth Anniversary Exhibit, 1989
Wildlife Preserves, 1989
Weiner Dog Art, 1990
Unnatural Selections, 1991
Cows of Our Planet, 1992
The Chickens Are Restless, 1993

Far Side Gallery 4, 1993
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Joan Lowery Nixon 1927-

American Author of Over 100 Children's Books
Four-time Edgar Award Winner for Best
Young-Adult Mysteries

BIRTH

Joan Lowery Nixon was born on February 3, 1927, in Los Angeles, California. Her father, Joseph Michael Lowery, was an accountant, and her mother, Margaret (Meyer) Lowery, worked as a kindergarten teacher before she married. Joan has two younger sisters, Marilyn and Pat.

YOUTH

Nixon's childhood was happy, filled with creative activities. Her family shared a large double house with Margaret's parents,

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Harriet and Mathias Meyer, in Hollywood. In the house, two living areas were joined by a large room that the family called the playroom. Her mother, Margaret, set up the room with a piano, paints, an easel, and a worktable. She filled the cupboards with puzzles, games, toys, and art supplies. Nixon spent many happy hours in that room.

As soon as Joan was old enough to sit up, her mother and grandfather read to her. By the time she was three years old, she memorized words from her favorite books. For family celebrations, she would write special little poems, "carefully printing them inside elaborately decorated greeting cards." Family puppet shows created by her mother presented Nixon with her first challenge—a live audience. For the shows, Joan and her sisters helped make the puppets and write scripts based on popular fairy tales, such as *Peter Rabbit*. The family presented their productions to children in nearby hospitals, orphanages, and schools. Nixon was amazed at the children's enthusiastic response to the puppets, even a young Japanese audience who could not speak English. Her first poem was published on the children's page of the magazine *Children's Playmate* when she was ten years old.

Nixon loved to read many different kinds of books. Mysteries were her favorite. "From the time I discovered mysteries, I was in love with them, and 'I Love a Mystery' was my favorite radio program," she reminisces. "My father thought this wasn't a suitable program for children, and it probably wasn't, because it scared me to death, but it was great to listen to under the covers."

When Nixon was 12, her grandfather died and the family moved to another section of Hollywood. "We had some famous neighbors," she recalls, "the producer-director, Cecil B. DeMille; the comedian, W. C. Fields; and the champion prizefighter, Jack Dempsey." She remembers the thrill of sitting near child-actress Shirley Temple in a local ice cream parlor.

EARLY MEMORIES

"Reading was my favorite occupation, and I well remember my mother pulling me from a chair and saying, 'You must go outside and get some fresh air and exercise,'" Nixon recalls. "Often, I'd sneak the book outside and plop down on the grass to continue my reading, getting the benefit of the fresh air, perhaps, but not the exercise. My favorite book was *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott. I identified with Jo, who wrote stories in the attic of the March home, because I desperately wanted to be a writer, too."

EDUCATION

Nixon attended the public schools in her neighborhood. Seventy-Fourth Street Elementary School was two blocks from her house in one direc-

tion, and Horace Mann Junior High was less than two blocks in another. In school, there were many opportunities to test her wings. While attending Horace Mann she took a course in creative writing and submitted poems to the school newspaper. After her family moved to east Hollywood, she entered the ninth grade at LeConte Junior High School. Students at LeConte were given the freedom to choose their own course of study. Nixon chose journalism, and almost immediately became editor of the school newspaper.

That same year, on December 7, 1941, Japanese airplanes bombed Pearl Harbor. The attack, which occurred on Oahu island, Hawaii, caught the U.S. by surprise. The result was immediate entry into World War II. U.S. citizens threw themselves into action. Men joined the army, navy, and marines. Many women who previously had not worked outside the home took jobs in the defense industry, building tanks and planes. Nixon got busy, too, serving breakfast to servicemen in the school cafeteria. And she found a new outlet for her writing talents—showering lonely servicemen with letters.

At Hollywood High School the following year, an English teacher encouraged Nixon to continue in journalism, telling her, "You have talent. You're going to be a writer." Added incentive came from an unlikely source—her favorite movies. Many popular movies at that time glamorized the role of female reporters. Nixon graduated from Hollywood High School in 1945. A week later, she began taking journalism classes at the University of Southern California.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Nixon's college professors taught her the realities of writing for a living. "My training in journalism taught me discipline," she recalls. "For one thing, I learned to create at the typewriter. We took our exams at the typewriter. Journalism taught me to focus, because I had to sit down and write, whether I felt like it or not—no waiting for inspiration. I learned the skill of finding the important facts in a story, and how to isolate them from all the unnecessary details." Nixon gained experience writing about starlets for a fan magazine.

While attending USC, Nixon met her husband-to-be, Hershell "Nick" Nixon. They became engaged immediately, but did not marry until he finished a program in the Navy that took him overseas. In 1947, while Nick was away, Nixon graduated from USC with a B.A. in journalism.

FIRST JOBS

Nixon looked for work in journalism, but war correspondents returning at the end of the war snapped up most of the jobs. She worked, instead,

with the Los Angeles School District as a substitute teacher in elementary school. Teaching was so enjoyable that she took night courses in education. In 1949, she earned a teaching certificate at California State College and found a position teaching the third grade. Her occasional writing efforts slowed to infrequent nonfiction articles and short fiction in such magazines as *Parents* and *American Home*.

Joan and Nick Nixon married on August 6, 1949. They had four children, all now grown: Kathleen, Maureen, Joseph, and Eileen. While moving among different cities due to Nick's work, Nixon stayed busy raising her children, teaching, and publishing occasional pieces of her writing. In 1960, the family settled in Corpus Christi, Texas.

BECOMING A WRITER

Soon after arriving in Texas, Nixon attended a writer's conference. The comments of two speakers prompted her to think about writing for children. She reasoned, "I have children, I have taught children, and I have the vivid kind of memory which enables me to remember all the details I saw and the emotions I felt when I was a child." Her two oldest daughters were in the second and third grade at the time, and they liked the idea. But, they told her in no uncertain terms, "You have to write a book, it has to be a mystery, and you have to put us in it!"

Nixon started out by writing mystery books for 8 to 12 year olds. In her first series, she gave each of her children a starring role. Kathy and Maureen appeared in her first book, *The Mystery of Hurricane Castle* (1964). The plot, as Nixon explained in *The Writer*, came directly from the family's experience upon moving to Corpus Christi. A hurricane swept through the city. Heavy rains and wind caused temporary evacuation. In the story, Kathy and Maureen Nickson, and their younger brother, Danny, are left behind during a similar evacuation. The children take refuge in a house that is said to be haunted. Nixon's other children were not left out. Eileen "starred" in *The Mystery of the Grinning Idol* (1965), and Joe was the main character in *The Mystery of the Secret Stowaway* (1968).

Nixon's life soon overflowed with activity: writing books, teaching creative writing at local schools, libraries, and colleges, and writing a humor column for the *Houston Post* newspaper. She realized that she would have to give something up so that she could devote full time to writing. Regrettably, she decided to stop teaching. "But the decision made room for such a fulfilling, enjoyable occupation," she said later, "that it's worth all the effort."

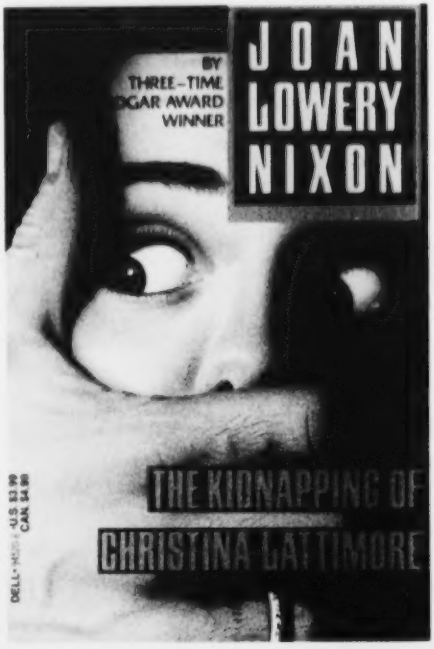
CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

In a career that spans 30 years, Nixon has written over 100 books. Today, nearly two million of her books are in print; they are translated into

Swedish, French, Italian, and Japanese. Nixon has written a wide variety of books, including picture books, early readers, novels for 8 to 12 year olds, and novels for young adults. Other books include a nonfiction series on geology co-authored with her husband, various religious works, and *Writing Mysteries for Young People* (1977), a handbook for adults. Most of Nixon's young-adult novels fall into two categories: mysteries and historical fiction.

THE GRAND DAME OF MYSTERY

Nixon has written numerous popular mystery novels for young-adult readers, in addition to those she wrote for 8 to 12-year-olds earlier in her career. Indeed, her mysteries are so popular that she is regarded as the "grande dame" of young-adult mystery writers. Much of the praise is for her intriguing plots and characters and her messages of hope. Her first young-adult mystery, *The Kidnapping of Christina Lattimore* (1979), won the Edgar Allan Poe Award from the Mystery Writers of America for the best mystery book of the year. In the book, Christina is kidnapped and held for ransom, but is later suspected of arranging the kidnapping to get money from her grandmother. Nixon went on to win the Edgar Award three more times: for *The Seance* (1980), a story about a seance that begins as an innocent game but leads to murder; for *The Other Side of Dark* (1986), in which a girl wakes up from a coma to discover that her mother is dead and that she must find the attacker before he kills her; and for *The Name of the Game Was Murder* (1993), set on Catalina Island at the fortress-like home of a girl's great-uncle, who teaches her a deadly game. With these books, Nixon became the first author to win the Edgar Allan Poe Award four times.



Nixon's mysteries are entertaining and fun to read because she adds humor to break up the suspense. Nixon has used comedy in her books since the beginning of her career when her daughter, Kathy, first suggested "putting something funny" in her stories. "You can't sustain a

feeling of suspense through an entire book," Nixon has said. "Humor is often useful in relaxing the reader."

HISTORICAL FICTION

In addition to her mystery stories, Nixon has written several different series of historical fiction for young adults. These series are set in different parts of the United States and in different historical eras—from the Old West in the 1800s, to Chicago during that same era, to New York City in the early 1900s, to Hollywood in the 1940s—but they all feature stories about children. The historical series entitled the "Orphan Train Adventures," which takes place during the last half of the 1800s, is considered one of her best. This series was inspired by some 100,000 children of poor U.S. immigrants who were placed with foster families in the west between 1854 and 1929. The newly widowed Mrs. Kelly decides she can no longer care for her children. She sends them west on the orphan train to improve their lives. The children discover that not only will they be separated from their mother, but they will be split up from each other as well. The series follows the story of each child's adventures with their new families. Nixon received the distinguished Golden Spur Award from the Western Writers of America for two of the "Orphan Train" books, *A Family Apart* (1988) and *In the Face of Danger* (1989).

Nixon uses the genre of historical fiction to teach readers about concepts that may be less familiar to young readers today, such as sacrifice, self-denial, and unwavering commitment to an ideal. "These stories give me the opportunity to show that history isn't simply a collection of dates and wars and kings and presidents," she explained in *The Writer*, "but that *children* have always helped make history, that *children* are not only important to the past, but are helping to shape history being made today."

THE AUTHOR'S APPROACH

Nixon gathers material for her books "from places I have lived and visited, people I have known, and interesting things I have seen, with the deeper, underlying thoughts which are exclusively mine: my beliefs, my approach to life, my goals, even my own sense of what is humorous, right or good." She jots ideas on scraps of paper and tacks them on a bulletin board. When she is ready to start a new book, she thumbs through the ideas until she finds one that is "ready."

ADVICE TO YOUNG WRITERS

Nixon has met many hopeful writers over the years who have talent, but who may lack the drive and determination to succeed. "It's important to know that you'll need that determination and persistence and the courage to continue. You may shed a tear or two when a manuscript

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is rejected . . . you may not like it when an editor suggests a rewrite. . . . But if you want to be successful, published writers, you'll have to be able to take editorial direction."

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

The Nixon family moved to Houston, Texas, in 1974. Nixon's husband is retired from his job as a geological consultant. The oldest daughter, Kathleen, is also a writer and is currently working on "Detect-A-Mystery" scripts for school and library mystery events, an adult mystery novel, and an interactive CD-ROM mystery game with Nixon and the youngest daughter, Eileen. Maureen is a full-time homemaker with six children. Joseph practices law in his own firm, and also is serving his first term as Representative in the Texas Legislature. Eileen, who majored in theater arts in college, ran a company, Sold Out!, which produced mystery weekends, mystery cruises, and mystery fund raisers. She has also produced, directed, and co-authored with Nixon and Kathleen.

Nixon maintains an office in her two-story home where she writes about six hours a day, completing about three books a year. Recently she finished the Disney Press "Casebuster" mystery series for 7- to 11-year-olds. The boys in the stories who help their detective father solve mysteries are based on two of her grandsons.

HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS

Nixon's hobbies include reading, travel, and spending time with her 13 grandchildren.

HONORS AND AWARDS

Outstanding Science Trade Book for Children (National Science Teachers Association and Children's Book Council Joint Committee): 1979, for *Volcanoes: Nature's Fireworks*; 1980, for *Glaciers: Nature's Frozen Rivers*; 1981, for *Earthquakes: Nature in Motion*

Edgar Allan Poe Award, Best Juvenile Mystery (Mystery Writers of America): 1980, for *The Kidnapping of Christina Lattimore*; 1981, for *The Seance*; 1987, for *The Other Side of Dark*; 1994, for *The Name of the Game Was Murder*

Golden Spur Award (Western Writers of America): 1988, for *A Family Apart*; 1989, for *In the Face of Danger*

SELECTED WRITINGS

FICTION FOR YOUNGER READERS

The Mystery of Hurricane Castle, 1964
The Mystery of the Grinning Idol, 1965

The Mystery of the Haunted Woods, 1967 (sequel to *The Mystery of Hurricane Castle*)
The Mystery of the Secret Stowaway, 1968
The Statue That Walks at Night, 1995
The Legend of the Lost Mine, 1995
The Haunted Theater, 1995
The Thief at Piney Point Manor, 1995

MYSTERIES FOR YOUNG ADULTS

The Kidnapping of Christina Lattimore, 1979
The Seance, 1980
Specter, 1982
The Ghosts of Now, 1984
The Stalker, 1985
The Other Side of Dark, 1986
The Dark and Deadly Pool, 1987 (Mary Elizabeth Series)
Haunted Island, 1987
Secret, Silent Screams, 1988
The Island of Dangerous Dreams, 1989
Whispers from the Dead, 1989
A Candidate for Murder, 1991
The Haunted House of Honeycutt Street, 1991
The Mystery Box, 1991
The Weekend was Murder!, 1992 (Mary Elizabeth Series)
The Name of the Game Was Murder, 1993
House of Fear, 1995
Spirit Seeker, 1995

HISTORICAL FICTION FOR YOUNG ADULTS

Maggie, Too, 1985 (Maggie Series)
And Maggie Makes Three, 1986 (Maggie Series)
Maggie Forevermore, 1987 (Maggie Series)
A Family Apart, 1988 (Orphan Train Adventures)
Caught in the Act, 1989 (Orphan Train Adventures)
In the Face of Danger, 1989 (Orphan Train Adventures)
A Family Trilogy, 1990 (Hollywood Daughters Series)
A Place to Belong, 1990 (Orphan Train Adventures)
Overnight Sensation, 1990 (Hollywood Daughters Series)
High Trail to Danger, 1991 (Sarah and Samantha Series)
Star Baby, 1991 (Hollywood Daughters Series)
Land of Hope, 1993 (Ellis Island Series)
Land of Promise, 1993 (Ellis Island Series)
A Dangerous Promise, 1994 (Orphan Train Adventures)
Keeping Secrets, 1995 (Orphan Train Adventures)
Land of Dreams, 1995 (Ellis Island Series)

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NONFICTION

Oil and Gas: From Fossils to Fuels, 1977 (with Hershell H. Nixon)
Volcanoes: Nature's Fireworks, 1978 (with Hershell H. Nixon)
Glaciers: Nature's Frozen Rivers, 1980 (with Hershell H. Nixon)
Earthquakes: Nature in Motion, 1981 (with Hershell H. Nixon)
Land Under the Sea, 1985 (with Hershell H. Nixon)

FURTHER READING

BOOKS

Contemporary Authors, Vol. 38
Something About the Author, Vol. 44; Vol. 78
Something About the Author Autobiography Series, Vol. 9
Twentieth-Century Children's Writers, 1989
Who's Who in America 1995

PERIODICALS

Houston Post, May 5, 1994, p.D1
The Writer, Oct. 1987, p.19

ADDRESS

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New York, NY 10036-4094

Gary Paulsen 1939-
American Writer of Books for Children and Adults
Author of *Dogsong*, *Hatchet*, and *The Winter Room*

BIRTH

Gary Paulsen was born to first-generation Scandinavian parents on May 17, 1939, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. His father, Oscar, was a career Army officer who served in Europe with Gen. George Patton during World War II. During his earliest years, while his father was in the war, Gary lived with his mother, Eunice, in Chicago, where she worked in a munitions plant. He has no memories at all of his father before 1946, when he was seven and the family was reunited at a military post in the Philippines.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

YOUTH

Paulsen has led a life of incredible adventures, both exciting and terrifying. One of his earliest occurred on the trip to the Philippines to meet up with his father. He and his mother were on a troop ship sailing to Manila. They saw an airplane go down in the ocean. To their horror, they watched, helplessly, as the passengers were torn apart by sharks.

When the Paulsens returned to the United States in 1949, life quickly became a series of unhappy experiences for young Gary. As an "army brat," he seldom stayed at one post or in one school for more than a few months at a time. He was shy, a misfit, incompetent at sports and, by his own admission, barely mediocre at academics. Although his problems at school were bad, his problems at home were even worse. Both parents were sinking into a fog of alcoholism and fighting frequently. Wherever they were, he sadly recalls, "they were the town drunks." Living with them became so unsettling that he would es..ape at every opportunity to the homes and farms of relatives in northern Minnesota.

A pivotal experience came one freezing winter day when he was walking past the local library. He decided to go inside to warm up. The librarian offered him a library card, and a book to take home. He started to read in an old chair in the basement to escape his unpleasant home life—that first library card came in his early teen years when he most needed support, encouragement, and an escape from his unstable home. Paulsen still remembers the thrill of being introduced to the world of books. "When she handed me the card, she handed me the world. I can't even describe how liberating it was." He read westerns, science fiction, and even the classics that the librarian occasionally slipped in with her other recommendations. To this day, although he no longer remembers that hometown librarian's name, he appreciates her interest and her help. Paulsen himself describes the powerful influence of books on his young life: "It was as though I had been dying of thirst and the librarian had handed me a five-gallon bucket of water. I drank and drank."

It was during these early teen years that Paulsen's family life deteriorated into chaos and he was sent to live permanently with relatives. His grandmother and his aunts and uncles became his "safety net," he recalls, providing at last a stable environment. He delivered papers and set pins in a bowling alley to earn spending money and pay for his clothes. He also worked on the relatives' farms, helping out with all the chores. In an era with few machines to help with the heavy labor, the work was pure drudgery. Later, as an adult, he appreciated the value of hard work and learned to apply it to his writing as well. In 1994, Paulsen wrote a lyrical tribute to that simpler time in *Clabbered Dirt, Sweet Grass*, the book that marked his debut in adult nonfiction.

EDUCATION

Despite his love of reading, school was very difficult for Paulsen. Moving around so often meant that he never quite caught up with his classmates. By ninth grade he was skipping class so much that he missed half the year. He graduated from Thief River Falls High School with the shakiest of grade-point averages—"I think they graduated me from high school to get rid of me," he says. He then briefly attended Bemidji State College in northern Minnesota, paying for his tuition with money he earned trapping animals for the state.

At 19, determined to turn his life around, Paulsen quit school and joined the Army. He gives a lot of credit to an Army drill sergeant for helping him overcome his bad attitude. "He cared about my success," Paulsen says. "It took that sergeant about three days to straighten me out. I'd fought all my life but I couldn't beat him. I worked hard after that, deciding to become an electronics engineer." He was assigned to missile duty. After his three-year tour of duty was completed in 1962, he took extension courses for certification in electronics engineering.

BECOMING A WRITER

At first, Paulsen worked maximum-security, high-tech jobs, tracking satellites at a government facility in White Sands, New Mexico, and working in the aerospace departments for Bendix and Lockheed. By 1966, though, he realized that his future lay elsewhere. He decided impulsively that he wanted to be a writer. "It was a very strange feeling," he explains. "I absolutely knew it was right." Despite his secure job and promising career, he quit.

Paulsen fabricated a résumé and went looking for a job as a magazine editor, where he hoped he could learn the business. He landed in Hollywood, California, on the staff of a company that published about 20 magazines. There, he learned to write copy, proofread, and design photo spreads. He lived on a sailboat in Ventura Harbor, worked as a film extra, and found time to indulge in a wood-carving hobby that produced a prize-winning sculpture in an exhibition. At night, he would go home to write.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Paulsen soon became disenchanted with California and returned to northern Minnesota, where he holed up in a cabin and wrote. Initially, he was quite successful. His first book, *The Special War*, about Vietnam, was published in 1966. That was followed by his first novel, *Some Birds Don't Fly*, published in 1968, and his first novel for young adults, *Mr. Tucket*, published in 1969. With so many quick sales of his work, Paulsen thought

he had it made. "I thought I'd have the Nobel Prize in a week," he says, adding ruefully, "I didn't sell another word for seven years." He moved to Taos, New Mexico, and began a period of depression and heavy drinking. He eventually chose sobriety and quit drinking in 1973. He moved back to Minnesota and began again to write at night. His writing came to a brief halt after the 1977 publication of *Winterkill*. He was sued for libel by someone who believed the book was based on their family. Paulsen ended up taking the case all the way to the Minnesota Supreme Court. He won, but he also went bankrupt from the legal expenses. He moved to a remote cabin and found work setting animal traps. It took him six days to cover his 20-mile route of trapping lines, traveling on foot or on skis. A friend gave him a team of huskies and an old sled to help him out.

Paulsen's experiences with the dogs had a tremendous effect on his life. "One day about midnight we were crossing Clear Water Lake, which is about three miles long," Paulsen says. "There was a full moon shining so brightly on the snow you could read by it. There was no one around, and all I could hear was the rhythm of the dogs' breathing as they pulled the sled." Paulsen decided on the spur of the moment to take a seven-day trip through the woods with the dogs. "I didn't go home—my wife was frantic—I didn't check the lines, I just ran the dogs. . . . For food, we had a few beaver carcasses. . . . I was initiated into this incredibly ancient and

Gary Paulsen

THE TORTILLA FACTORY

PAINTINGS BY Ruth Wright Paulsen

very beautiful bond, and it was as if everything that had happened to me before ceased to exist." Paulsen has said that the attachment he formed with these dogs on their journey across northern Minnesota changed his outlook so sharply that he gave up trapping and returned to writing with a heightened sense of commitment and compassion.

By this point Paulsen's work had started to sell again, but his prolific output in those days was "almost all adult stuff," he says—mysteries, westerns, action thrillers, books on building and home repair and shelter. "I kind of foundered along in a good year, making two or three thousand. One of the worst years I had, I made $683 writing." His work began to draw serious notice by 1983, though, and he was given his first advance by a publishing house.

That was also the year Paulsen added still another adventure to his exciting life story by entering the Iditarod, the grueling 18-day dog-sled race across Alaska. Extending from Anchorage to Nome, the Iditarod covers some 1,200 miles of frozen wilderness. Sled teams run basically all day and night, with stops of just a few hours to rest and feed the dogs. Paulsen came in 42nd out of 73 teams, a respectable showing for his first attempt. That adventure led to the creation of Paulsen's acclaimed novel *Dogsong* (1985) and his first Newbery Honor citation. He ran the Iditarod again in 1985, but that time he and his team were caught on the Bering Sea, "in winds so strong," recounts the St. Paul (Minnesota) *Pioneer Press*, "the dogs were blown right into the air. A plane had to lift them off the ice, and they didn't finish the course." Heart disease (now under control) forced Paulsen to cancel a third attempt at the Iditarod and to quit running dogs. Devastated at first, he soon brought his new fund of time and energy to his writing.

Throughout much of the 1980s, Paulsen concentrated on young-adult novels. With *Dancing Carl* in 1983 and *Tracker* the following year, his work began to receive some recognition. But it was *Dogsong* (1985), a rites-of-passage story about an Eskimo boy learning to run a dog team, that brought him his first Newbery Honor citation and "changed everything," he says. "I started to focus on writing the same energies and efforts that I [had been] using with dogs." The end result was a writing surge throughout that decade. Paulsen produced such best-selling and award-winning novels for young readers as *Hatchet* (1987) and *The Winter Room* (1989)—his second and third books to win the Newbery Honor citation—as well as *The Voyage of the Frog* (1989).

In *Hatchet*, in particular, Paulsen touched a chord with readers. This story of a 13-year-old boy who is left alone in the Canadian wilderness after a plane crash, with only a hatchet to help him survive, has been enjoyed by about 30 million readers since its publication. It still inspires about 200 kids each day to write a letter to the author. *Hatchet* and Paulsen's other

best young-adult books typically include teenage characters fighting for survival, in the face of physical and emotional pressures. They often face unforgettable and harrowing adventures in the outdoors, especially in the wilderness. Dogs and other animals figure prominently. Paulsen uses short, simple sentences to reinforce the drama and deep emotion in his stories.

Paulsen has continued to be tremendously productive. Since 1990 alone, he has published more than three dozen new titles, and he is at work on many more. His total output of books now approaches 140 in number and includes juvenile, young adult, adult, fiction, and nonfiction. This steady outpouring of books has brought him critical acclaim and financial success. In 1992, he began the "Culpepper Adventures," a juvenile series of humorous stories. And he has come to terms with some of his childhood pain in an autobiography, *Eastern Sun, Winter Moon* (1993).

ON HIS AUDIENCE

Paulsen once described his philosophy of writing for young people, demonstrating his great respect for his readers. "I tell the truth and try to be as honest as I can. A lot of young-adult books talk down to kids. I go to schools and meet with kids. I've found they're smarter than a lot of adults, and they're honest."

ADVICE TO YOUNG WRITERS

When asked to offer advice, Paulsen encourages aspiring young writers to keep practicing, to keep "just doing it. The main thing is to keep working. There is always something you can write."

MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES

Paulsen's life is a litany of intense experiences, many of which he has used as the basis for his exceptionally popular books. He has recounted harrowing, true tales of storms at sea, of confronting a bear in his own garden, and of fighting off a charging moose,

but his fine-tuned humor led him to divulge, in *Winterdance*, a different kind of experience. He described the frenzy of the 1983 Iditarod during his first moments out of the starting gate: "We went through people's yards, ripped down fences, knocked over garbage cans. At one point I found myself going . . . across a back yard with 15 dogs and a fully loaded sled. A woman standing over the kitchen sink looked out with wide eyes as we passed [by] and I snapped a wave at her before clawing the handlebar again to hang on while we tore down her picket fence. . . . And there is a cocker spaniel who will never come into his back yard again."

"I was unofficially voted the least likely to get out of Anchorage. Bets were made on how soon I would crash and burn. Two blocks, three. Some said one. It was very nearly true."

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Paulsen has been married three times. He divulges no information about his first two marriages, except that he has a son and daughter, Lance and Lynn, from his first marriage. After the divorce, the children remained with his former wife. Paulsen was unable to cope with family responsibilities when Lance and Lynn were growing up, and he had little contact with them. In recent years, they have renewed their relationship with him. Lance owns a construction firm in Atlanta, and Lynn is a high-school teacher.

His wife now is the former Ruth Ellen Wright, whom he met by chance while standing in line in a Taos, New Mexico, post office. FBI agents came in, looking for someone. Paulsen was worried that they were looking for him—apparently the FBI had become interested in his first book, *The Special War*, because of its specific descriptions of missiles. With $20 in his pocket, he turned to the woman in line behind him, asking her to hold his money for safekeeping. He says that he knew instinctively that this woman would be his wife. "When I looked into those eyes, I fell in love; I knew this was the woman I'd marry." They were wed on May 4, 1971, and have a son, James, now in his twenties and an elementary-school teacher. Ruth Wright Paulsen, a talented painter, has also illustrated some of her husband's books.

The Paulsens' main residence is a 200-year-old adobe house on their ranch in New Mexico. They also own property in Minnesota, and sometimes live aboard their 44-foot sailboat, which is docked at Ventura Isla Marina, California.

HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS

Emphasizing that there is no room in his life for the luxuries that his fabulous success could provide, Paulsen continues to live the simple, out

door life that has been his pleasure and his strength since boyhood. The boat he owns is old—"so that I can work on it myself"—and, other than that, books are his interest as well as his profession. He writes for hours every day, seven days a week, and reads himself to sleep at night. "I could live very well," he admits. "Suddenly I'm one of those people who could play golf. But I'm not like that. I just work. I believe in what I do, and I just work."

SELECTED WRITINGS

FICTION FOR YOUNG READERS

Mr. Tucket, 1968
The Curse of the Cobra, 1977
Winterkill, 1977
The Foxman, 1977
The Golden Stick, 1977
The Night the White Deer Died, 1978
The Green Recruit, 1978 (with Ray Peekner)
The Spitball Gang, 1980
Dancing Carl, 1983
Popcorn Days and Buttermilk Nights, 1983
Tracker, 1984
Dogsong, 1985
Sentries, 1986
The Crossing, 1987
Hatchet, 1987
The Island, 1988
The Voyage of the Frog, 1989
The Winter Room, 1989
The Boy Who Owned the School, 1990
Canyons, 1990
Woodsong, 1990
The Cookcamp, 1991
The Monument, 1991
The River, 1991
The Haymeadow, 1992
A Christmas Sonata, 1992
Nightjohn, 1993
Dogteam, 1993
Harris and Me: A Summer Remembered, 1993
Sisters/Hermanas, 1993
The Car, 1994

NONFICTION FOR YOUNG READERS

Martin Luther King: The Man Who Climbed the Mountain, 1976 (with Dan Theis)

The Grass Eaters: Real Animals, 1976
Dribbling, Shooting, and Scoring Sometimes, 1976
Riding, Roping, and Bulldogging—Almost, 1977
Hiking and Backpacking, 1978 (with John Morris)
Downhill, Hotdogging, and Cross-Country, 1979
TV and Movie Animals, 1980 (with Art Browne, Jr.)
Sailing: From Jibs to Jibbing, 1981
Father Water, Mother Woods: Essays on Fishing and Hunting in the North Woods, 1994

"CULPEPPER ADVENTURES" SERIES

The Case of the Dirty Bird, 1992
Dunc's Doll, 1992
Culpepper's Cannon, 1992
Dunc Gets Tweaked, 1992
Dunc's Halloween, 1992
Dunc Breaks the Record, 1992
Dunc and the Flaming Ghost, 1992
Amos Gets Famous, 1993
Dunc and Amos Hit the Big Top, 1993
Dunc's Dump, 1993
Amos's Last Stand, 1993
Dunc and the Scam Artist, 1993
Dunc and Amos and the Red Tattoos, 1993
Dunc's Undercover, 1993
The Wild Culpepper Cruise, 1993
Dunc's Underground Christmas, 1993
Dunc and the Haunted House, 1993
Cowpokes and Desperadoes, 1994
Prince Amos, 1994
Coach Amos, 1994
Amos and the Alien, 1994
Dunc and Amos Meet the Slasher, 1994
Dunc and the Greased Sticks of Doom, 1994
Amos's Killer Concert Caper, 1995
Amos Gets Married, 1995
Amos Goes Bananas, 1995
Dunc and Amos Go to the Dogs, 1995

ADULT FICTION AND NONFICTION

The Special War, 1966 (with Raymond Friday Locke)
Some Birds Don't Fly, 1968
The Implosion Effect, 1976
The Death Specialists, 1976
C.B. Jockey, 1977

The Sweeper, 1981
Clutterkill, 1982
Murphy, 1987
The Madonna Stories, 1988
Murphy's Gold, 1988
Murphy's Herd, 1989
Clabbered Dirt, Sweet Grass, 1992
Eastern Sun, Winter Moon: An Autobiographical Odyssey, 1993
Murphy's Stand, 1993
Winterdance: The Fine Madness of Running the Iditarod, 1994

PLAYS

Communications, 1974
Together Apart, 1976

SCREENPLAY

A Cry in the Wilderness, 1990 (co-author; adapted from *Hatchet*)

HONORS AND AWARDS

Children's Book of the Year Award (Child Study Association): 1986, for *Dogsong*
Parents' Choice Award (Parents' Choice Foundation): 1986, for *Dogsong*; 1991, for *The Boy Who Owned the School*
Booklist Editor's Choice Citation: 1988, for *Hatchet*; 1991, for *Woodsong*
Dorothy Canfield Fisher Children's Book Award: 1989, for *Hatchet*
Reading Magic Award (*Parenting* magazine): 1990, for *The Voyage of the Frog*; 1990, for *The Winter Room*
Teachers' Choice Award (International Reading Association): 1990, for *The Voyage of the Frog*
Best Book of the Year (*Learning* magazine): 1990, for *The Voyage of the Frog*
Spur Award (Western Writers of America): 1991, for *Woodsong*; 1993, for *The Haymeadow*
Children's Choice Awards (International Reading Association/ Children's Book Council): 1994, for *Nightjohn* and *Dogteam*

FURTHER READING

BOOKS

Paulsen, Gary. *Eastern Sun, Winter Moon: An Autobiographical Odyssey*, 1993
Snodgrass, Mary Ellen. *Crossing Barriers: People Who Overcame*, 1993
Something about the Author, Vol. 79
Twentieth-Century Children's Writers, 1989

PERIODICALS

Los Angeles Times, Dec. 13, 1990, p.J11
St. Paul Pioneer Press, Dec. 12, 1992, p.12D
Publishers Weekly, Jan. 25, 1993, p.73; Mar. 28, 1994, p.70
Washington Post Book World, Dec. 6, 1992, p.20
Writer's Digest, Jan. 1992, p.8; July 1994, p.42

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Cynthia Rylant 1954-
American Writer for Children and Young Adults
Author of the *Henry and Mudge* series, *When I Was Young in the Mountains*, *The Relatives Came*, and the 1993 Newbery Winner, *Missing May*

BIRTH

Cynthia Smith Rylant (pronounced RYE-lunt) was born on June 6, 1954, in Hopewell, Virginia. Her parents were John T. Smith, an army sergeant, and Leatrel (Rylant) Smith, a registered nurse. "Rylant," the author's pen name, was taken from her mother's maiden name.

YOUTH

Rylant lived with her mother and father in Illinois until the age of four. Those were not happy years for the family. Her father was an alcoholic, her parents fought often and loudly, and young Cyndi blamed herself. When Rylant was four, she and her mother left her father. John Smith had been a soldier in the Korean War, where he had contracted hepatitis. By the time his wife and daughter left, he was already very sick. But he couldn't stop drinking, and that made him even sicker. When she was thirteen, her father called, and they spoke for the first time in nine years. They exchanged letters and phone calls over the next few months, but he died before Cynthia got a chance to see him again.

Rylant and her mother moved to Cool Ridge, West Virgina, to live with her grandparents, Elda and Ferrell Rylant. But soon afterward, Leatrel left to attend nursing school, to develop a skill so she could support her daughter. During her four-year absence, Leatrel would write often (enclosing a stick of gum in every letter) and visit a few times each year. For Rylant, it was another very painful loss.

These losses had a profound effect. As Rylant revealed in her autobiography *But I'll Be Back Again*, "They say that to be a writer you must first have an unhappy childhood. I don't know if unhappiness is necessary, but I think maybe some children who have suffered a loss too great for words grow up into writers who are always trying to find those words, trying to find a meaning for the way they have lived. . . . I lost my parents when my mother finally left my father and his alcohol, bundling me onto an airplane and flying from Illinois to West Virginia. . . . I did not have a chance to know him or to say goodbye to him, and that is all the loss I needed to become a writer."

For four years, Rylant lived with her grandparents, several of their youngest children, and a couple of cousins, all together in a four-room house. Grandpa was a coal miner in the mountains of Appalachia, an area known for its poverty. Even in the 1960s, conditions were primitive. They had electricity, unlike many of their neighbors, but there was no running water. They had to carry water from the well and heat it for baths, which Rylant would take with her cousins in a big metal tub. There were no toilets, either —they had to use an outhouse out back.

Despite these hardships, Rylant was happy. There was a lot of love in that house, too, plus plenty of fresh food from hunting and the local farms, a best friend named Cindy right down the road, and teachers who were kind and loving and made her feel important and welcome.

When Rylant was eight, her mother completed her nurse's training, and the two of them moved to the nearby town of Beaver, West Virginia. For Rylant, the move came at a perfect time. As much as she had loved the

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safety and security of her grandparents' house in Cool Ridge, she was ready for life in town: hot and cold running water, indoor toilets, lots of kids to play with, and decent TV reception. "And thank-you-God for that TV reception!" Rylant once wrote. "Because in 1964, when I was nine years old, I watched the Beatles on the Sunday night 'Ed Sullivan Show' and it turned me and the rest of the world upside down. I became one of those Beatle maniacs. I covered my bedroom with their pictures, bought their bubblegum cards with every spare dime, listened to their records nonstop from the time I got home from school to bedtime, and wrote desperate letters to Paul McCartney. The Beatles gave me a childhood of sweetest anticipation." As Rylant also revealed, "In my little West Virginia town I dreamed that, of all the girls in the world, I would be the one Paul McCartney would eventually find happiness with."

EARLY MEMORIES

While TV did play an important part in her early life, books and reading did not. "All this time, all these years of growing up so far," she recalls, "I did not read many books. I did not *see* many books. There was no library in our little town. No bookstore. Adults got paperbacks off the drugstore rack and kids bought comic books. I read comics by the hundreds, trading huge piles of mine for huge piles of Danny Alderman's or whoever else would swap with me. I guess most people assume that future famous authors are supposed to be reading fat hardbound books and writing poetry by age ten. But all I wanted to do was read *Archie* and play the Beatles."

EDUCATION

Rylant enjoyed school. She was always a good student and had lots of friends. She was involved in a variety of school activities as well, including the band, student council, the drama group, and the majorette corps. Still, she didn't feel confident about her place socially. "I was popular in school—'A' student, school queen. But I always felt on the fringe of things and worried that any time I might drop off, might go to school one day and not meld."

Perhaps her biggest preoccupation in high school, though, was her two-year, on-again, off-again relationship with her boyfriend. When they finally split up, she was devastated. "I didn't really have any ambition other than to get married. . . . But then my boyfriend and I broke up, so when I got out of high school, I didn't have anyone to marry." With no other plans, she decided to go to college.

Rylant enrolled at Morris Harvey College (now University of Charleston, West Virginia), planning to become a nurse. But along the way, in her first English class, she fell in love with good literature. She went on to earn

her Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in English literature in 1975. She enjoyed college so much that she decided to continue her studies at Marshall University in Huntington, West Virginia, earning her Master of Arts (M.A.) in literature in 1976. Several years later she returned to college to earn her Masters in Library Science (M.L.S.) in 1982 at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Rylant doesn't provide much information about her marriages. She was married and divorced twice, both times before she was 30. She has one son, Nate, now about 15, from her first marriage.

CHOOSING A CAREER

Shortly after completing her master's degree in English in 1976, Rylant got a job in the children's room of the public library. For Rylant, it was a revelation. "I'd never been in the children's room of a library before," she explains. "In fact, I hadn't even walked into a public library until I was in my twenties. I'd never seen real children's books—never seen anything like *Make Way for Ducklings*, never heard of something called *Charlotte's Web*."

"My job was to check out books and shelve them. I started reading the books I was supposed to be shelving and soon I was taking children's books home by the boxful. I was enchanted. I read children's books all night long. . . . And I knew, with a certainty like I'd never had about anything before, that I wanted to write children's books. And I believed I would be good at it."

She started writing at home, interrupted for a short time to take care of her new baby, Nathaniel. When he was about six months old, she put him to bed one night, crawled into her own bed, took up her yellow notepad, and wrote "When I was young in the

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mountains"—the opening line and the title of what would be her first published book. She wrote the complete draft in just one hour, typed it up, and sent it off to a publisher (which she had chosen out of a writers' guidebook). Two months later she received word that her book would be published. It was, in retrospect, awfully quick and easy for a first book.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Since then, Rylant has written a broad range of books, from board books for the youngest readers to picture books, early readers, and young adult poetry and novels. Her best work, critics agree, is characterized by her simple yet poetic writing style, sensitive and perceptive characterizations, emotional realism, telling details, and evocative settings, particularly those in the mountains of her native West Virginia.

Rylant started out her career writing for younger readers. In her first picture book, *When I Was Young in the Mountains* (1982), she gently and lovingly reminisces about her early life with her grandparents. The book quickly secured the respect of critics and the affection of her new fans—children, parents, teachers, and librarians. She went on to achieve similar success in several other books for younger readers. *The Relatives Came* (1985) speaks vividly, in both words and pictures, of the joy and love present when the relatives in this extended family come to stay. For the illustrations by Stephen Gammell, the book won the Caldecott Honor Award. The charming *Henry and Mudge* series, some 14 books to date, features the affectionate relationship between Henry, a small boy, and Mudge, his very large (180 pounds!), drooling, chewing dog. That series has captivated and motivated many beginning readers. The award-winning *Appalachia: The Voices of Sleeping Birds* (1991), is Rylant's description of the people and places of Appalachia, where she grew up, her loving testimonial to family and home.

For slightly older readers, Rylant has written poetry, short stories, nonfiction, and novels. Her poetry collections include *Waiting to Waltz: A Childhood* (1984), which vividly depicts her experiences in the small town of Beaver, growing from contented child to restless teenager; and *Soda Jerk* (1990), which presents, in verse, the thoughts of a soda jerk (someone who works at a soda fountain) on his own life and the lives of his customers. *A Couple of Kooks: And Other Stories about Love* (1990) is a compilation of stories about love in all its forms. Her memoir *But I'll Be Back Again: An Album* (1989) is an autobiography of her earliest years, retelling her life story and interweaving events from the times.

Several of her young adult novels have won acclaim. Her first, *A Blue-Eyed Daisy* (1985), is an episodic novel. The chapters relate vignettes in the life of Ellie Farley, age 11, in the coal mining hills of Appalachia. In *A Fine White Dust* (1986), Rylant tells the story of Pete, a deeply religious

boy who believes he has found the incarnation of God in a charismatic preacher, who ultimately betrays him. The book was widely praised for its sensitive and delicate handling of the religious theme, which critics called rare in children's literature. In *A Kindness* (1988), Rylant tells the story of 15-year-old Chip, the only child of a single mother. His life is thrown into disarray when his mother becomes pregnant and has a new baby. Chip—and his mother—face some difficult choices, which Rylant handles with sensitivity and insight, according to critics.

Missing May (1992) is Rylant's most widely acclaimed novel to date. This haunting story is told by 12-year-old Summer. An orphan, she had been bounced from one relative to the next until she is finally sent to live with her elderly Aunt May and Uncle Ob. They become a devoted, loving family. Then Aunt May dies, and Summer must help Uncle Ob overcome his grief, and face her own. Critics praised the novel for its masterful writing, graceful language, tightly woven plot, and subtle characterization. In 1993, *Missing May* won the John Newbery Medal, one of the most prestigious awards in children's literature.

Since then, Rylant has continued writing, working on several different types of books. In *An Angel for Solomon Singer* (1992), she writes movingly of a lonely man in New York City who finds a place that feels like home. *Best Wishes* (1992) is a brief memoir about her own life and experiences as a writer, written for younger readers. *The Dreamer* (1993) is a creation story in a picture-book format that depicts God as a young artist. *I Had Seen Castles* (1993), Rylant's most recent novel for young adults, is the heart-rending and thought-provoking story of a young man coming to terms with his experiences with his first love and with World War II.

In a friendly note to readers, Rylant once

recorded her feelings about life as reflected in her books. "I think that life is full of beautiful things, beautiful small things and beautiful large things to celebrate. I celebrate them in my books. And I hope that you will celebrate with me."

MAJOR INFLUENCES

Rylant has cited a broad range of authors as influences on her writing style, from James Agee (*Let Us Now Praise Famous Men, A Death in the Family*), Harper Lee (*To Kill a Mockingbird*), and E. B. White (*Charlotte's Web, Stuart Little*) to Virginia Lee Burton (*The Little House, Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel*), Robert McCloskey (*Make Way for Ducklings*), and Margaret Wise Brown (*Goodnight Moon*). But she reserves her greatest praise for the poets Randall Jarrell and Donald Hall. "My favorite children's book was written by the poet Randall Jarrell. He wrote the most stunningly beautiful children's book called *The Animal Family*. That was the book that made me write. Maurice Sendak did the art. And Donald Hall, the poet, wrote *The Ox-Cart Man*, a picture book that had a tremendous impact on me."

MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES

Winning the Newbery Award was a pivotal experience for Rylant. Once, when asked how it felt to win the award, she responded, "I guess the word I'd use to describe the first two or three days after I heard the news is *precious*. I was elated, in a daze. I couldn't sit down or read a book. I just wandered."

ON TELEVISION AND FILM ADAPTATIONS

Rylant's attitude about adapting her books for television reveals her sense of integrity and principle. Recently she was questioned about making her novel *Missing May* into a made-for-TV movie. Here is her response: "I think it's important for the book to remain a book for quite a long time before anyone translates it to the screen. I want it to live in people's imaginations. Once it goes on that film that is the image that will keep. Maybe someday it will go to another medium, but not right now."

HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS

Rylant is a bit of a homebody. She enjoys spending time with her son, Nate, and arranging, rearranging, and redecorating her home. She loves animals and has several pets, including two dogs (Martha, her yellow Labrador, and Leia, a Welsh Corgi) and two cats (Blueberry and Edward Velvetpaws). And Rylant also adds, "I love to see films and to watch whales, sea otters, and dolphins. I'm a fan of Woody Allen, Vincent Van Gogh, James Agee, Don McLean, and Calvin and Hobbes."

WRITINGS

FOR YOUNGER READERS

When I Was Young in the Mountains, 1982
Mrs. Maggie, 1983
This Year's Garden, 1984
Every Living Thing, 1985
The Relatives Came, 1985
Night in the Country, 1986
Birthday Presents, 1987
Children of Christmas: Stories for the Season, 1987
All I See, 1988
Mr. Griggs' Work, 1989
Appalachia: The Voices of Sleeping Birds, 1991
An Angel for Solomon Singer, 1992
Best Wishes, 1992
The Dreamer, 1993
The Blue Hill Meadows and the Much-Loved Dog, 1994
The Old Woman Who Named Things, 1994

"HENRY AND MUDGE" SERIES

Henry and Mudge, 1987
Henry and Mudge in Puddle Trouble, 1987
Henry and Mudge in the Green Time, 1987
Henry and Mudge under the Yellow Moon, 1987
Henry and Mudge and the Sparkle Days, 1988
Henry and Mudge and the Forever Sea, 1989
Henry and Mudge Get the Cold Shivers, 1989
Henry and Mudge and the Happy Cat, 1990
Henry and Mudge and the Bedtime Thumps, 1991
Henry and Mudge Take the Big Test, 1991
Henry and Mudge and the Long Weekend, 1992
Henry and Mudge and the Wild Wind, 1992
Henry and Mudge and the Careful Cousin, 1994
Henry and Mudge and the Best Day Ever, 1995

FOR OLDER READERS

Waiting to Waltz: A Childhood, 1984
A Blue-Eyed Daisy, 1985
A Fine White Dust, 1986
A Kindness, 1988
But I'll Be Back Again: An Album, 1989
A Couple of Kooks: And Other Stories about Love, 1990
Soda Jerk, 1990
Missing May, 1992
I Had Seen Castles, 1993

HONORS AND AWARDS

Boston Globe—Horn Book Award: 1991, for *Appalachia: The Voices of Sleeping Birds*; 1992, for *Missing May*
Booklist's Top of the List Award for Youth Fiction: 1992, for *Missing May*
John Newbery Medal (American Library Association): 1993, for *Missing May*, the "most distinguished contribution to American literature for children"

FURTHER READING

BOOKS

Authors and Artists for Young Adults, Vol. 10
Contemporary Authors, Vol. 136
Rylant, Cynthia. *Best Wishes*, 1992
Rylant, Cynthia. *But I'll Be Back Again: An Album*, 1989
Something about the Author Autobiography Series, Vol. 13
Twentieth-Century Children's Writers, 1989

PERIODICALS

Booklist, June 1 & 15, 1993, p.1840
Horn Book Magazine, Nov./Dec. 1987, p.695; Jan./Feb. 1992, p.31; July/Aug. 1993, pp.416, 420
School Library Journal, May 1993, p.26

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Mildred D. Taylor 1943-

American Writer of Novels for Young Adults
Author of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry,*
Winner of the 1977 Newbery Medal

BIRTH

Mildred Delois Taylor was born on September 13, 1943, in Jackson, Mississippi, to Wilbert Lee Taylor and Deletha Marie Davis Taylor. She has one older sister, Wilma.

YOUTH

"Much of my life has been shaped by my being born black in America," Taylor writes in her memoir in *Something about the Author Autobiography Series.* "I was born in a segregated city, in

a segregated state, in a segregated America." Her family's experiences with discrimination throughout her childhood years bear that out.

Taylor's father was working as a trucker when she was born. When she was just three weeks old, he was involved in a racial incident at work. It was one in a series of prejudiced encounters, and for Wilbert Taylor, it was the last straw. He went home that night and started packing. He was determined to head north, hoping to find a more tolerant environment in which to raise his daughters. He took a train north, settled in Toledo, Ohio, and found a job in a factory. After three months, he was able to send for his wife and two daughters.

They started out in a duplex on a busy commercial street. They had plenty of extra room, which soon came in handy. Many of their relatives, who also left the segregated South looking for better opportunities in the North, came to stay with the Taylors while getting settled. Their extended family was especially close, and Mildred and her sister loved having their aunts, uncles, and cousins come to stay with them.

But above all, Mildred was devoted to her father. "I was blessed with a special father, a man who had unyielding faith in himself and his abilities, and who, knowing himself to be inferior to no one, tempered my learning with his wisdom. In a foreword to *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, I described my father as a master storyteller; he was much more than that. A highly principled, complex man who did not have an excellent education or a white-collar job, he had instead strong moral fiber and a great wealth of what he always said was simply plain common sense. Throughout my childhood he impressed upon my sister and me that we were somebody, that we were important and could do or be anything we set our minds to do or be. He was not the kind of father who demanded A's on report cards, although he was pleased when we got them, or ranted and raved if there was a D or two. He was more concerned about how we carried ourselves, how we respected ourselves and others, and how we pursued the principles upon which he hoped we would build our lives."

When Mildred was about nine, the family moved from their duplex to a larger home in a quiet suburban neighborhood. Unfortunately, that move gave her the opportunity to learn more about racism in America. The Taylor family was one of the first black families to integrate what had previously been an all-white neighborhood. As a young child, Mildred didn't understand why there were so many "For Sale" signs on her new neighbors' lawns. When blacks started to move in, her father explained, many of the white families moved out, afraid to live near blacks.

EARLY MEMORIES

Although Mildred grew up in the North, her family's roots were in the South. They went back often to visit. At first the visits were pure joy. She

loved the long car rides, the picnics packed by her mother, and the visits with relatives.

She remembered: "Running barefoot in the heat of the summer sun, my skin darkening to a soft, umber hue; chasing butterflies in the day, fireflies at night; riding an old mule named Lady; even picking a puff of cotton or two—there seemed no better world. And at night when neighboring relatives would gather to sit on the moonlit porch or by the heat of the fire, depending on the season, talk would turn to the old people, to friends and relatives who then seemed to have lived so long ago. As the storytellers spoke in animated voices and enlivened their stories with movements of great gusto, I used to sit transfixed, listening, totally engrossed. It was a magical time."

But over time, she grew to understand the many injustices that had forced her parents to leave the South. Taylor recalled "that one summer I suddenly felt a climbing nausea as we crossed the Ohio River in Kentucky and was again admonished by my parents that my sister and I were now in the South and must remain quiet when we pulled in the gas stations, that we must not ask to use the restrooms, that they would do all the talking.

"That summer and the summers to come I grew to realize that the lovely baskets of food my mother always packed for the trips, she prepared because we could not eat in the restaurants; that the long overnight ride was because we could not sleep in the motels; that the jugs of water and lemonade were because we could not drink at the water fountains—at least not the fountains marked "White Only," which were usually newer and cleaner. I was to learn the fear of the police siren. I was to learn to hate the patrolman who frisked [searched] my father and made him spread-eagle—all because of 35 miles per hour. I was to learn the terror of the back road and the long, long wait for morning while my father, exhausted from the drive, tried to sleep as my mother watched guard.

"Those were hard things for a child to learn."

EDUCATION

EARLY EDUCATION

Taylor attended the public schools in Toledo. She started out in a well-integrated school. When the family moved, though, her new school had very few black children. Some years she was the only black student in her class. That was very difficult for her. She felt a great deal of pressure to do well, feeling that she was representing all black people and worrying that any failure on her part would reflect poorly on her whole race. And she felt angry about the ways in which blacks were portrayed in her

textbooks. "The history books talked of blacks as a docile, subservient, almost moronic people, content and happy with slavery. They talked of a people content with their way of life still, a people with no past except slavery and not much future. . . . There was no pride like that I felt when I heard stories told by my father and other members of the family. I remember once trying to explain those stories in class, about the way things really were. . . . I tried to tell the history I had learned through the stories, but I was a shy child and I just couldn't articulate the way the storytellers could. The words didn't come out right; no one believed me. Most of the students thought I was making the stories up. Some even laughed at me. I couldn't explain things to them. Even the teacher seemed not to believe me. They all believed what was in the history books."

While these experiences made Taylor feel frustrated and angry, they also made her want to write. "[By] the time I entered high school, I had a driving compulsion to paint a truer picture of black people. I wanted to show the endurance of the black world, with strong fathers and concerned mothers; I wanted to show happy, loved children about whom other children, both black and white, could say: 'Hey, I really like them! I feel what they feel.' I wanted to show a black family united in love and pride, of which the reader would like to be a part."

In high school, Taylor was an excellent student: an officer of her class, the editor of the school newspaper, and a member of the National Honor Society. Throughout high school, she was often the only black student in her college preparatory classes. She felt especially estranged during her freshman year. For the first time ever, the school had elected a black homecoming queen. A series of ugly racial incidents ensued, as whites refused to accept a black queen. For Taylor, it was further proof that racism existed in the North, just like in the South. She graduated from Scott High School in 1961.

UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

Taylor attended the University of Toledo. Throughout her four years there, she had her eyes firmly set on her future goals. She planned to be a writer, and she took many writing and literature classes as preparation. She also wrote stories and entered contests for aspiring writers, although she never won. In addition, Taylor planned to enter the Peace Corps. She had always wanted to travel, particularly to Ethiopia. President John F. Kennedy had just created the Peace Corps, and she saw that as her way to get to Africa. By the time she was a junior in college, she had already submitted her application. Despite these plans, though, she honored her parents' wishes that she earn a practical degree, one she could use to get a job. She earned her Bachelor of Education degree from the University of Toledo in June 1965.

THE PEACE CORPS

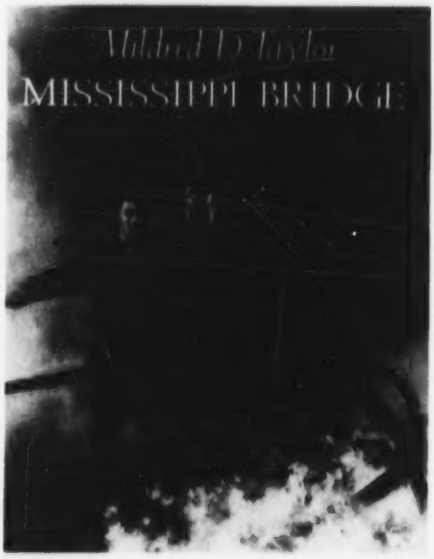
During her senior year in college, Taylor was accepted into the Peace Corps. Her family was upset, at first. Although she had told them of her plans, they hadn't really taken her seriously. They were worried about her traveling so far from home. But they relented, finally, when they saw how determined she was.

Just after finishing college Taylor spent the summer in training, first in Utah and then in Arizona, where she taught English as a second language on a Navajo Indian reservation. In September 1965 she left for Ethiopia. For two years she taught English and history at a small school there. She loved it. As Phyllis J. Fogelman wrote in *Horn Book*, "[Taylor] recalls those years as the happiest in her adult life. She fell in love with Africa—the variety of the landscape, the sound of singing in the fields, the people who accepted and cared for her—and she has always hoped to return. As the end of her stay in Ethiopia approached, Mildred had terrible nightmares about having to leave, only to awaken each morning filled with joy that she was still there."

When she returned to the United States, she spent about a year working for the Peace Corps offices. She started out doing recruiting, traveling throughout the Midwest. She then worked as an instructor at a Peace Corps training camp in Maine.

GRADUATE EDUCATION

In September 1968, Taylor enrolled at the University of Colorado School of Journalism. She was returning to school during a time of widespread social unrest at American universities. Many students were protesting American involvement in the Vietnam war. The Black Power movement was also prominent on American campuses, as black students fought for increased black enrollment and programs that would focus on black history and culture. "It was a period of growing self-respect and self-determination," she recalls.



Taylor joined the campus-wide Black Student Alliance (BSA) and became involved in the programs it sponsored—the Black Studies Program (BSP) and the Black Education Program (BEP). As part of the BSA, Taylor traveled with other graduate students to universities around the country, investigating black studies programs at other schools and devising recommendations for developing their own program at the University of Colorado. Taylor earned her Master of Arts degree in journalism in August 1969. She remained at the university for two years after receiving her degree, creating a study skills program as part of the Black Education Program and working as its coordinator.

FIRST JOBS

Although Taylor had continued to write throughout this period, she decided that she needed to devote all of her time to writing. She left the University of Colorado in 1971 and moved to Los Angeles. There she took on temporary office work, just enough to pay the bills and save her time and energy for writing. And that's what she did, every evening and all weekend. The work was demanding and frustrating, and she felt like she was going nowhere. She kept submitting stories for publication, and every story was rejected. She started to question whether she had any future as a writer. She also started to apply for jobs more in line with her education and experience. She was offered a position as a reporter with CBS, which forced her to make a choice. Should she take an interesting and challenging job assignment, or continue trying to make it as a writer? Ultimately, Taylor chose the latter.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Soon after moving to Los Angeles in 1971, Taylor met a man from Central America, Errol Zea-Daley. They were married in August 1972; they divorced in 1975.

BECOMING A WRITER

In late 1973 Taylor entered a contest sponsored by the Council on Interracial Books for Children. She heard about the contest at the last minute, so she decided to work all weekend revising a story she had previously written and that had already been rejected for publication. Her story was based on one she had been told by her father. In it, a boy narrated a story about trees being cut down on the family land. Taylor knew there was a problem with the way the story was written, but she didn't know how to fix it. Then suddenly she conceived the idea of Cassie Logan.

As Taylor later described it, "[On] a well-remembered day in late September a little girl named Cassie Logan suddenly appeared in my life. Cassie was a spunky eight-year-old, innocent, untouched by

discrimination, full of pride, and greatly loved, and through her I discovered I now could tell one of the stories I had heard so often as a child. From that meeting came *Song of the Trees.*" She worked on the rewrite all weekend, revising it so that Cassie would tell the story. In February 1974, Taylor learned that her story had won the contest—and that several companies were interested in publishing her work. Her writing career was about to take off.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

With *Song of the Trees,* Taylor began a series of novels that are widely acclaimed as emotionally evocative portraits of life for African-Americans. Drawing upon her own family's stories and story-telling tradition, she has portrayed rural Southern life for Black Americans. Taylor uses first-person narration, evoking the oral storytelling tradition in which she was raised. Her stories stress the strength of Black families, their love of the land, their pride in their race, their self-respect and personal integrity, and their battles with racism and bigotry. With her honest and believable characters, graceful prose style, and vivid dialogue she has produced sensitive recreations of life in the rural South.

THE LOGAN FAMILY SAGA

Taylor's most famous work is her series of books featuring the Logans, a Black family living on several hundred acres of their own land in Mississippi. The Logan family includes Cassie, the spunky narrator; her three brothers, Stacey, Christopher-John, and Little Man; her father, David Logan, a railroad man; her mother, Mary Logan, a teacher; plus grandparents, aunts and uncles, and more. The characters in these books are composite portraits of members of her own family, as she relates here: "Through David Logan have come the words of my father, and through the Logan family the love of my own family. If people are touched by the warmth of the Logans, it is because I had the warmth of my own youthful years from which to draw. If the Logans seem real, it is because I had my own family upon which to base characterizations. And if people believe the book to be biographical, it is because I have tried to distill the essence of Black life, so familiar to most Black families, to make the Logans an embodiment of that spiritual heritage."

The Logans were so real and so important to Taylor that she couldn't say goodbye to them when she finished the final draft of *Song of the Trees,* the first book in which they appear. "If you have met Cassie and her brothers," Taylor writes, "then perhaps you can understand why, when I sent that final manuscript off to Dial [Publishers], I did not want to give them up. Those four children make me laugh; they also make me cry, and I had to find a way of keeping them from fading into oblivion. In

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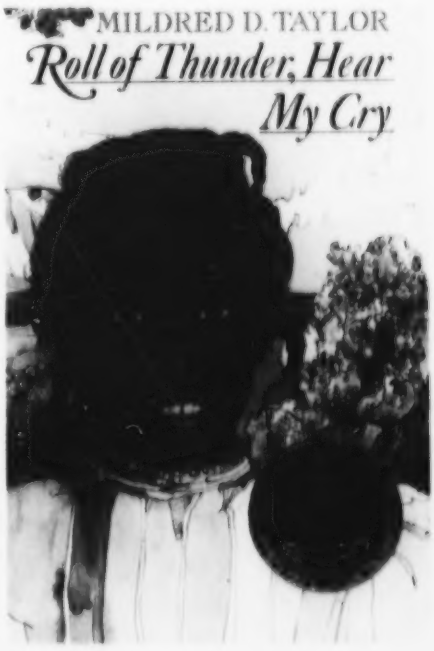
August 1974 came the answer: I would write another book about the Logans, one in which I could detail the teachings of my own childhood as well as incorporate many of the stories I had heard about my own family and others. Through artistic prerogative I could weave into those stories factual incidents about which I had read or heard, as well as my own childhood feelings, to produce a significant tapestry which would portray rural Black southern life in the 1930s."

And that is exactly what she did. The four novels that comprise the basic Logan family saga are *Song of the Trees*, her first short novel, and the longer novels *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (1976), *Let the Circle Be Unbroken* (1981), and *The Road to Memphis* (1990). These books showcase the family's experiences from the early 1930s through the early 1940s, during the depths of the Great Depression. Tracing the growth and maturity of Cassie and her brothers, these novels show a loving, proud, and defiant Black family and their daily trials with bigotry and discrimination. These riveting and engrossing books had an immediate and profound effect on readers. Response, in fact, was overwhelmingly positive. Taylor's works have won many major awards, including the prestigious John Newbery Medal in 1977 for *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*.

Taylor has written other shorter novels as well, several of which feature episodes from the Logan family. *The Friendship* (1987) shows a racial confrontation between a Black man and a White store keeper, in which the Logan children figure as witnesses. In *The Gold Cadillac* (1987), Taylor makes her sole departure from the Logan saga. This story, taken from Taylor's youth, has a Northern Black family with two daughters taking a trip down South. After encountering prejudice and harassment throughout that trip, they come to appreciate their lives in the North. *Mississippi Bridge* (1990) is narrated by Jeremy Simms, a White boy and neighbor of the Logans. Simms observes several ugly racial incidents just before and while passengers are boarding a



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bus, and then witnesses the tragic conclusion to that bus ride. *The Well: David's Story* (1995), Taylor's most recent novel, goes back to an earlier generation. It features an episode from the childhood of David Logan, the father in the Logan family novels, and what happens one summer when all the neighbors' wells run dry.

In her review of *Let the Circle Be Unbroken*, Christina McDonnell explained why readers love Taylor's novels so much. "[Taylor's work] draws us into the circle of an inspiring black family, nourishes us with their strength and love, and shows us their sustaining traditions, heritage, and community. [Taylor's novels have] so much of what we need today: hard truth courageously told, deep love that binds and strengthens, dignity in the face of oppression, and warmth and humor rooted in compassion. The Logans' story will strengthen and satisfy all who read it."

MAJOR INFLUENCES

Taylor frequently acknowledges her family storytellers as strong influences on her work. But it was her father, in particular, who had the greatest influence. In the Author's Note to *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, Taylor writes, "My father was a master storyteller. He could tell a fine old story that made me hold my sides with rolling laughter and sent happy tears down my cheeks, or a story of stark reality that made me shiver and be grateful for my own warm, secure surroundings. He could tell stories of beauty and grace, stories of gentle dreams, and paint them as vividly as any picture with splashes of character and dialogue. His memory detailed every event of 10 or 40 years or more before, just as if it had happened yesterday.

"By the fireside in our northern home or in the South where I was born, I learned a history not then written in books but one passed from generation to generation on the steps of moonlit porches and beside dying fires in one-room houses, a history of great-grandparents and of slavery and of the days following slavery; of those who lived still not free, yet who would not let their spirits be enslaved. From my father the storyteller I learned to respect the past, to respect my own heritage and myself. From my father the man I learned ever more, for he was endowed with a special grace that made him tower above other men. He was warm and steadfast, a man whose principles would not bend, and he had within him a rare strength that sustained not only my sister and me and all the family, but all those who sought his advice and leaned upon his wisdom."

"My father was my greatest inspiration for writing and my greatest literary resource," Taylor adds in her autobiography. "When he died, many of the stories died with him. When he died, much of my will to write died as well."

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WRITINGS

Song of the Trees, 1975 (first novel in the Logan family saga)
Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, 1976 (second novel in the Logan family saga)
Let the Circle Be Unbroken, 1981 (third novel in the Logan family saga)
The Friendship, 1987
The Gold Cadillac, 1987
The Road to Memphis, 1990 (fourth novel in the Logan family saga)
Mississippi Bridge, 1990
The Well: David's Story, 1995

HONORS AND AWARDS

Council on Interracial Books for Children Award: 1974, for *Song of the Trees*
New York Times Outstanding Book of the Year: 1975, for *Song of the Trees*
John Newbery Medal (American Library Association): 1977, for *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*
Notable Children's Trade Book in the Field of Social Studies: for *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*
Coretta Scott King Award: 1981, for *Let the Circle Be Unbroken*; 1988, for *The Friendship*; 1990, for *The Road to Memphis*
Best Books for Young Adults (American Library Association): 1981, for *Let the Circle Be Unbroken*
Boston Globe-Horn Book Award: 1988, for *The Friendship*
Christopher Award: 1988, for *The Gold Cadillac*

FURTHER READING

BOOKS

Authors and Artists for Young Adults, Vol. 10
Something about the Author, Vol. 70
Something about the Author Autobiography Series, Vol. 5
Twentieth-Century Children's Writers, 1989
Who's Who among Black Americans, 1994-1995
World Book Encyclopedia, 1994

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Christian Science Monitor, Oct. 14, 1981, p.B1
Horn Book, Aug. 1977, p.401 & p.411; Mar./Apr. 1989, p.179
Language Arts, May 1981, p.599

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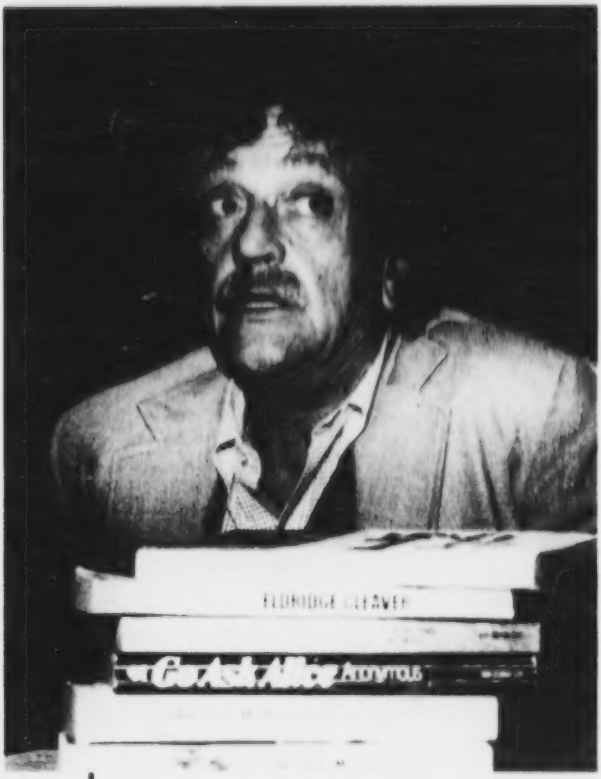
Dial Books
375 Hudson Street
New York, NY 10014-3657



Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. 1922-
American Novelist and Dramatist
Author of *Cat's Cradle* and *Slaughterhouse-Five*

BIRTH

Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., was born in Indianapolis, Indiana, on November 11, 1922. His parents were Kurt Vonnegut, Sr., a successful architect who designed the family home, and Edith (Lieber) Vonnegut, the daughter of a wealthy brewer. He was the youngest of three children, one of whom, Alice, is deceased. His older brother Bernard is a physicist.

YOUTH

Vonnegut grew up during a difficult time in U.S. history. Anti-German feelings were very prominent in this country after the

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outbreak of World War I. Although the Vonneguts were fourth-generation German-Americans, they were treated with suspicion and disdain. His family also deprived him of any knowledge of the German language and culture. "They volunteered to make me ignorant and rootless," Vonnegut later said of his parents, "as proof of their patriotism." The family suffered economic hardships as well. Prohibition ended the income from his mother's family brewery, and the Depression meant far fewer opportunities for his father, because people couldn't afford an architect to design their new homes. Financially, they were devastated. Although both Bernard and Alice had gone to private schools, the family's sharply reduced circumstances meant that Kurt could not.

EARLY MEMORIES

In his novel *Slapstick*, Vonnegut speaks eloquently about the residual effects of the prejudice caused by the First World War. He feels he still bears psychological scars from the prejudice he and other Americans of German descent experienced. These memories remain fresh to him even today, seven decades later.

EDUCATION

Vonnegut attended Indianapolis's Shortridge High School, where he edited the daily paper and dreamed of becoming a journalist. After graduating in 1940, he entered Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. His father insisted that he learn "something useful," so he studied biology and chemistry despite his own desire to become a writer. "Cornell was a boozy dream," he has said, "partly because of the booze itself, and partly because I was enrolled exclusively in courses I had no talent for." He pursued his own goal outside of the classroom, editing and writing a column for the Cornell *Daily Sun*. In 1942, after just two years of college, Vonnegut left Cornell to fight in World War II.

Several years later, Vonnegut studied anthropology at the University of Chicago. His master's thesis was unanimously rejected at the time, but it was later approved and he was awarded his M.A. in 1971, when he had already become a famous author.

FIRST JOBS

WORLD WAR II

During his junior year at Cornell, with the United States already deep into World War II, Vonnegut left college to enlist in the armed forces. "I was flunking everything," he said later, "and was delighted to join the army and go to war." He was trained in mechanical engineering by the military, first at Carnegie Institute of Technology (now part of Carnegie-

Mellon University) in Pittsburgh, and later at the University of Tennessee. On Mother's Day in May 1944, Vonnegut was able to get a pass to go home. He arrived to discover that his mother, long prone to depression, had committed suicide the night before.

Three months later, in the summer of 1944, Vonnegut was sent overseas. The following December, he was captured by the German army during the Battle of the Bulge, their last major offensive. As a prisoner of war kept in a slaughterhouse in Dresden, he survived the Allied saturation bombing of that city. In February 1945, three consecutive raids by British and American bombers created a huge firestorm in Dresden, a German industrial city. Temperatures reached between 1,000 and 2,000 degrees. About 135,000 German people were killed in just a few hours. Vonnegut and other prisoners survived the firestorm because they were housed in the underground refrigerated meat locker of the slaughterhouse. This experience formed the basis of his critically acclaimed and best-selling novel, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, and has often been cited as the turning point in Vonnegut's life.

In April 1945, Vonnegut was liberated by Soviet troops and returned to the United States. His experiences in the war earned him the Purple Heart. In September, he married Jane Marie Cox, his childhood sweetheart, and they soon started a family. For the next two years, from 1945 to 1947, he worked as a reporter with the Chicago City News Bureau. It was at this point that he enrolled in anthropology courses at the University of Chicago. These were difficult years . Vonnegut was trying to study and to hold down a high-pressure job. He quit and took a public-relations position in the research laboratories of General Electric, moving his young family to Schenectady, New York.

BECOMING A WRITER

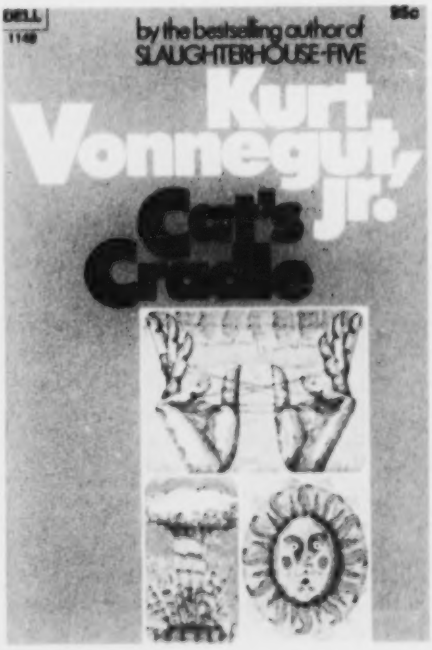
At this time, Vonnegut turned to writing fiction, for reasons that may seem surprising today. "I needed money," he recalls. "The one opportunity that existed was fiction, because magazines paid extremely well for short stories. . . . Very quickly I was making more money for [those] than I was from General Electric, so I quit." He and his wife and children relocated to Cape Cod, an island off the mainland of Massachusetts.

There is a moving aspect, also, to Vonnegut's career decision. When his mother committed suicide in 1944, she had been depressed about her failure as a writer of fiction for magazines. "She was a good writer, it turned out," he affirms, "but she had no talent for the vulgarity the slick magazines required. Fortunately, I was loaded with vulgarity, so when I grew up, I was able to make her dream come true. Writing for *Colliers* and the *Saturday Evening Post*, and *Cosmopolitan* and *Ladies' Home Journal* and so on, was as easy as falling off a log for me. I only wish she'd lived to see it."

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Vonnegut published his first novel, *Player Piano*, in 1952, a work that set the tone for his later fiction. Vonnegut's novels, typically, don't stress linear plot lines and relationships between characters. Instead, they rely heavily on symbols, themes, and philosophical questions about the meaning of life. Many contain elements of science fiction, fantasy, satire, and dark humor, as well as autobiographical elements. Despite their playful and humorous tone, his works often reflect a dark view of the horrors of civilization and the fate of humanity in the 20th century. In *Player Piano*, he used his experiences in public relations to create a darkly humorous work about the dangers of dehumanization in a technological future. While the sarcasm and elements of science fiction show glimpses of his much-admired later work, the few critics who paid attention to the novel found nothing remarkable in it. So Vonnegut returned to short stories, the best of which were later collected in *Welcome to the Monkey House* (1968). To supplement his income, he also worked for an advertising agency, taught high-school English, and established a Saab auto dealership.

In the late 1950s, when the market for short stories began to dry up, Vonnegut focused on writing another novel. *The Sirens of Titan*, published in 1959, is the story of an odyssey through space by Malachi Constant, who starts out as a hero and ends as a Satan figure for a cult religion. Ultimately, it becomes clear that all of human history has been manipulated by the Tralfamadorians, an alien race. The book won the praise of many readers, but it also contributed to Vonnegut's reputation as a science fiction writer, a designation he hated. While the book parodies the genre, many critics saw only the outer form. They relegated Vonnegut to a "science-fiction drawer" that he accused them of "mistaking for a urinal."



Mother Night, published in 1962, is a dark and strikingly different novel about an American who spies on the Nazis in World War II. The main character becomes so

immersed in his "cover" personality that it is difficult for both character and reader to determine who or what he really is. The author claims that *Mother Night* is his only novel with a moral: "We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be." Many see the book as one of Vonnegut's best. "It is an astonishing book," wrote fellow novelist Michael Crichton in the *New Republic*. "[*Mother Night* is] very gentle and funny and quiet and totally destructive. Nobody escapes without being shown, in a polite way, what an ass he is."

Cat's Cradle (1963) brought Vonnegut a larger and more appreciative readership and tremendous critical acclaim. The narrator, Jonah, is an author doing research for a book that would chronicle people's activities on the day the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. The protagonist travels around and ultimately ends up on a Caribbean island, where he converts to "Bokononism," a religion of untruths. By the end of the novel, the Earth is destroyed in a fiery apocalypse. In 1965, *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater; or, Pearls before Swine* appeared, telling the story of a multi-millionaire who tries, unsuccessfully, to help the world's poor. This novel introduced the recurring character of science fiction writer Kilgore Trout, Vonnegut's alter ego, the hack-writer that the author always feared he would become.

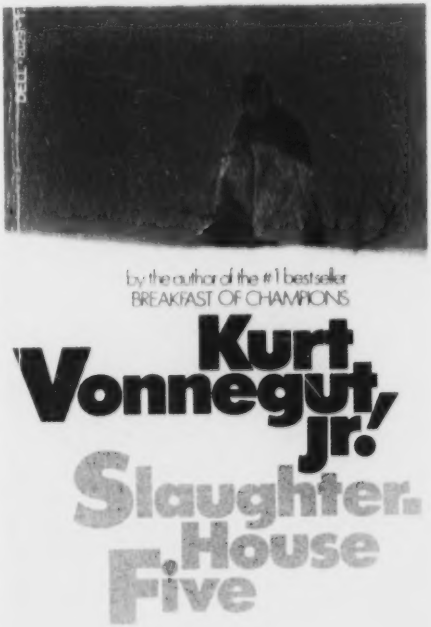
SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE

The turning point in Vonnegut's critical and popular career was *Slaughterhouse-Five; or, The Children's Crusade, A Duty-Dance with Death*, published in 1969. The center of the multiple plot lines is the experience of Billy Pilgrim, a young soldier trapped as a prisoner during the Dresden fire-bombing, then trapped again, later, by super-intelligent beings from the planet Tralfamadore. This novel is a comic exploration of the horrors of war and of people's limited ability to control their own destiny. Published during the war in Vietnam, this book with its strong anti-war message immediately brought Vonnegut tremendous popular success—and controversy as well. It quickly became a cult classic among anti-war protesters, and at the same time it was banned by some schools on charges of obscenity. When it was adapted as a feature movie, says *Current Biography*, it "catapulted Vonnegut to a level of fame rivaled by few contemporary American authors." He soon was lecturing on college campuses and, for one term, taught creative writing at Harvard. Personally, though, he became uneasy with his popularity and sank into a period of severe depression. He felt that with the publication of *Slaughterhouse-Five*, he had come to the "end of some sort of career."

Vonnegut next wrote a stage play, then a television script, before returning to writing novels in 1973. *Breakfast of Champions*, published that year, is the story of Dwayne Hoover, an auto dealer who goes berserk after reading a novel by Kilgore Trout. Hoover comes to believe that he is the

only sane person left in a world of unthinking robots. Seen by many as a satirical commentary on our nation's commercial culture, the book was a tremendous commercial success, as was his next novel, *Slapstick*, but the critics didn't like either of them. *Slapstick*, published in 1976, is written as the memoir of former president Dr. Wilbur Daffodil-11 Swain. He devises a program to combat loneliness whereby everyone in the United States is grouped into large, extended families. In *Jailbird*, published in 1979, a former aide to President Richard Nixon ruminates on his role in the Watergate scandal. This novel is a lengthy indictment of the American political and economic system that touches on McCarthyism, the trials of Sacco and Vanzetti, American labor history, Alger Hiss, and the Holocaust, in addition to Watergate and Nixon. Many commentators praised *Jailbird*, but Vonnegut's next few books brought only lukewarm reviews.

Vonnegut's reputation has risen again in the last decade, the surge beginning in 1985 with *Galápagos*. This hilarious meditation on evolution, narrated by Vietnam veteran Leon Trotsky Trout (the son of writer Kilgore Trout), spans one million years. Tourists are trapped on the Galápagos Islands after a nuclear war and worldwide political collapse. Their descendants evolve over time, growing fur, flippers, beaks, and smaller brains. *Bluebeard*, published in 1987, tells the story of Rabo Karabekian, an Armenian-American abstract expressionist painter. Vonnegut uses the story of Rabo, a veteran of World War II and a descendant of the survivors of the Turkish massacre of one million Armenians in 1915, to comment on the horrors of war.



In his most recent novel, *Hocus Pocus* (1990), Vonnegut focuses on Eugene Debs Hartke, a Vietnam veteran named after the famed American socialist and labor leader. It's 2001, and civilization is breaking down: racism is pervasive, illiteracy is widespread, radioactive waste fouls the cities, and criminals run rampant. For many critics, *Hocus Pocus* is sure proof that Vonnegut has lost none of his

astounding power as a novelist. As John Leonard wrote in *The Nation*, "*Hocus Pocus* seems to me to be Vonnegut's best novel in years—funny and prophetic, yes, and fabulous, too, as cunning as Aesop and as gloomy as Grimm; but also rich and referential; a meditation on American history and American literature; an elegy; a keening."

MAJOR INFLUENCES

Vonnegut has been compared with many writers, past and present, but admits that his own list of favorites and influences would change from day to day. He cites Mark Twain, whom he admires as America's greatest humorist, as a constant inspiration.

MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES

For Vonnegut, the effect of his mother's suicide was profound. He has contemplated ending his own life several times and attempted to do so once. His son has also wrestled with mental illness.

Vonnegut's biographers often point to his experience in Dresden as a pivotal point in his life, but he insists that they overestimate its importance. "I don't think people's lives are changed by short-term events like that," Vonnegut once said. "Dresden was astonishing, but experiences can be astonishing without changing you."

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Vonnegut married Jane Marie Cox, whom he had known since kindergarten, when he returned from army service in 1945. They had three children, Mark, Edith, and Nanette, before divorcing in 1979. In that same year, he wed Jill Krementz, a photographer and author of children's books. They had one daughter, Lily. That marriage was dissolved in 1991.

In addition to his biological children, Vonnegut is also the adoptive father of nephews James, Steven, and Kurt Adams, the sons of his sister, Alice, who died of cancer.

HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS

Vonnegut makes his home on Cape Cod and enjoys the water sports available there—swimming and sailing—as well as chess, painting, carving, sculpting, and music. He plays the clarinet.

WRITINGS

NOVELS

Player Piano, 1952
The Sirens of Titan, 1959

Mother Night, 1961
Cat's Cradle, 1963
God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater; or, Pearls before Swine, 1964
Slaughterhouse-Five; or, The Children's Crusade, A Duty-Dance with Death, 1969
Breakfast of Champions; or, Goodbye Blue Monday, 1973
Slapstick; or, Lonesome No More, 1976
Jailbird, 1979
Deadeye Dick, 1982
Galápagos: A Novel, 1985
Bluebeard, 1987
Hocus Pocus, 1990

OTHER

Canary in a Cat House, 1963 (short stories)
Welcome to the Monkey House, 1968 (short stories)
Happy Birthday, Wanda June, 1971 (play)
Between Time and Timbuktu, 1972 (TV script)
Wampeters, Foma, and Granfalloons: Opinions, 1974 (essays)
Sun, Moon, Star, 1980 (juvenile)
Palm Sunday, 1981 (essays)
Fates Worse Than Death: An Autobiographical Collage of the 1980s, 1991 (speeches and essays)

HONORS AND AWARDS

Purple Heart: 1945
Guggenheim Fellowship: 1967
Emmy Award for Outstanding Children's Program: 1985, for "Displaced Persons"
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Saturday Evening Post, May/June 1986, p.38

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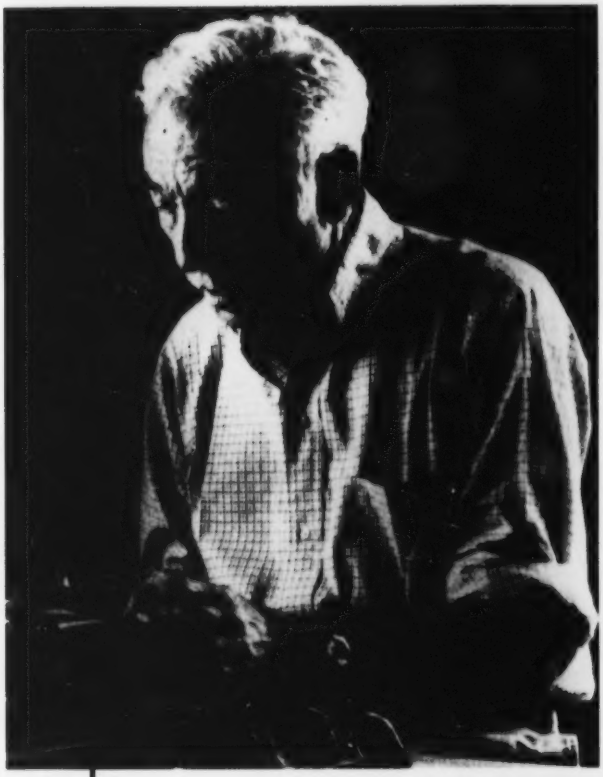

OBITUARY

E.B. White 1899-1985
American Essayist, Poet, Humorist, and Children's Writer
Author of *Charlotte's Web* and *Stuart Little*

BIRTH

E.B. (Elwyn Brooks) White was born July 11, 1899, in Mount Vernon, New York, to Samuel Tilly and Jessie Hart White. He was the youngest of their six children. When he was born, his two oldest sisters, Marion and Clara, were already 18 and 16, respectively. Then came his two brothers, Albert and Stanley, ages 11 and 8, and his sister, Lillian, age 5. One more child had died in infancy.

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By the time young Elwyn was born, his parents were approaching middle age and were quite wealthy. Samuel White was president of the prosperous piano firm of Horace Waters & Company on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan. He and his wife and children had moved from Brooklyn to a more prestigious address in Mount Vernon. There, in a large and comfortable house, the family enjoyed the advantages of upper-middle class suburban life.

YOUTH

In his later years, White would write at length about his youth. "If an unhappy childhood is indispensable for a writer, I am ill-equipped: I missed out on all that and was neither deprived nor unloved. It would be inaccurate, however, to say that my childhood was untroubled. The normal fears and worries of each child were, in me, developed to a high degree; every day was an awesome prospect. I was uneasy about practically everything: the uncertainty of the future, the dark of the attic, the panoply and discipline of school, the transitoriness of life, the frailty of the body, the sadness of the afternoon, the shadow of sex, the distant challenge of love and marriage, the far-off problem of a livelihood. I brooded about them all. . . . [I] often felt lonely and removed. I took to writing early, to assuage my uneasiness and collect my thoughts, and I was a busy writer long before I went into long pants." As White began to put his thoughts on paper, his appreciation of the world beyond the schoolroom found its way into stories and poems. By his middle teens, he had already won three literary prizes.

The usual boyhood pursuits of the early 20th century were also part of White's privileged childhood. He bicycled, learned to sail and to ice skate, played in the tower room of his house or in the darkness and dampness of the cellar. Many days, he would spend hours out back in the stables watching the coachman polish the horses' harnesses and wash the carriages.

EARLY MEMORIES

Brightening tales of his boyhood with humor, White loved to tell of "the fringe benefits of being the son of a piano man [and having a house] well supplied with musical instruments. . . . There were six of us children, and we were practically a ready-made band. All we lacked was talent." In his memoirs, he described the commotion created by the endless singing, composing, harmonizing and drumming in their parlor.

EDUCATION

White graduated from Mount Vernon High in 1917, winning college scholarships totaling $1,000—back when tuition for an entire year was

only $100. He chose to leave the metropolitan New York area for Ithaca, in upstate New York, to enroll at Cornell University. The United States had entered World War I that year, so he also did a stint in the Student Army Training Corps, but the war ended in 1918, before he was called to active duty. At Cornell, White's enthusiasm for the English language, coupled with his strong interest in journalism, lured him to hours of work on the *Daily Sun*, the student publication where he eventually served as editor-in-chief. In his mature years, however, White admitted that he regretted having neglected so much of his formal education for "time spent getting out the daily paper." He often said that he had come away from Cornell somewhat undereducated. He served as president of his fraternity and the Quill and Dagger, Cornell's honor society. White earned a bachelor of arts degree from Cornell in 1921.

At college White was first called "Andy," the nickname that would stay with him throughout his adult life. Its origin lay with Cornell's first president, Andrew D. White, and it was a nickname traditionally bestowed on students who bore the same last name. Elwyn Brooks was happy to relinquish the name he had never liked. His mother, White would say, had picked it when she ran out of names.

FIRST JOBS

In his first year after college, White held a series of entry-level jobs in New York City. He began work as a reporter for the United Press (now UPI). After several restless months, he went to work briefly for a public-relations firm. Next came a stint with the American Legion News Service. Then, in the spring of 1922, he set out with a friend on a six-month trip across the country in a Model T Ford. Another short-lived job followed, as a reporter for the Seattle *Times*. By mid-June 1923, again without employment, White sailed to Alaska, beginning his cruise as a passenger and working aboard ship for the return voyage. He described himself in those years as "being adrift on life's sea," yet, in reality, his footlessness was leading him toward his career. Years later, he would write about these experiences in two finely crafted essays, "Farewell, My Lovely!" (1936) and "The Years of Wonder" (1961).

CHOOSING A CAREER

In the fall of 1923, White returned to New York and worked in an advertising agency for two years, all the while submitting verses and sketches to newspapers and magazines. Occasionally, his pieces appeared in the columns of the daily city papers. It was not until the founding of *The New Yorker* in 1925, though, that he reached a turning point in his life. White was immediately attracted by the tone of the new magazine, mainly he said, "because the items were short, relaxed, and sometimes funny. I

was a short writer and lost no time in submitting squibs and poems. In return I received a few small checks and the satisfaction of seeing myself in print as a pro."

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

White began his lifelong connection with *The New Yorker* in 1926. The magazine, created one year earlier, went on to become one of the most influential literary journals of the 20th century. He first joined its staff as a part-time writer. By the following year, he was in a full-time position, contributing his amusing verse and cartoon captions, editorial essays for the "Notes and Comments" section at the beginning of "The Talk of the Town," and tag lines for the "newsbreaks," humorous items commonly used to fill empty column spaces.

Along with Harold Ross, the founding editor of the magazine, and James Thurber, the humorist and cartoonist, White is credited with having established the unique tone of *The New Yorker*. Although his work usually went unsigned, readers soon came to recognize his distinctive style. His work was best summarized in *The New Yorker's* own "Notes and Comments" section just after his death. "As an essayist, as a humorist, as a stylist, he was one of America's masters. In his paragraphs here he developed a new literary form: brief personal essays, conversational, lyrical, idiosyncratic, yet somehow capable of striking some chord common to all of us. He took events as they came along—ordinary household events, farm events, national and world events—and, sifting them through his odd, playful mind, came out with conclusions and observations that were sensible to the point of genius."

That distinctive style soon appeared in other formats as well. The end of the decade saw the publication of White's first two books, *The Lady Is Cold* (1929), a collection of poetry both humorous and serious, and *Is Sex Necessary?*

(1929), a gentle spoof of the numerous manuals appearing on that subject during the 1920s. The latter title, which White co-authored with James Thurber, established the reputation of both writers.

White's years at *The New Yorker* were personally, as well as professionally, rewarding. He met and soon fell in love with Katharine Sergeant Angell, a fascinating, competent, and decisive young fiction editor at the magazine. Katharine was already a wife and mother at the time, although dissatisfied with her marriage and determined to pursue a professional career. She eventually obtained a divorce, and she and White wed in 1929, beginning a happy marriage that would last until her death in 1977, nearly a half-century later.

Together, they helped to sustain the growing popularity of the publication. White loved New York for all of its opportunities and excitement, but he also felt a strong yearning for a simpler life. In 1938, he and his family finally moved to a farm they had bought some years earlier in North Brooklin, on the Maine seacoast. There, he and Katharine maintained their ties to *The New Yorker*, and White also began to write a monthly column, "One Man's Meat," for *Harper's Magazine*. The Whites returned briefly to city life in the early days of World War II to fill in on the sharply reduced staff of *The New Yorker*, but soon went back to the solitude of Maine. It was a way of life that would continue for years—work in New York and sabbaticals at the farm. They made Maine their permanent home in 1957.

White produced poetry and graceful prose on a wide range of topics, and his "casual, pithy approach to a paragraph defined brevity and wit for a generation of aspiring stylists," says *Time*. Much of his work was published in collections, one of the most acclaimed of which was *A Subtreasury of American Humor*, co-edited in 1941 with his wife and reprinted two decades later. White also revised and updated a writing manual originally prepared by William Strunk, Jr., his former English professor at Cornell. The result was the hugely successful *Elements of Style*, an enduring handbook on American English usage. To this day, both aspiring and seasoned writers turn to *The Elements of Style* for its clear, concise, and brief explanations of, in White's words, "the fundamentals: the rules of usage and the principles of composition." *The Second Tree From the Corner*, a collection of his best work over a period of 20 years, won the coveted Page One Award from the New York Newspaper Guild in 1954. This was to be only the first of many major honors accorded him in his lifetime. For his contributions to literature, he received the Presidential Medal in 1963, and a special Pulitzer Prize in 1978.

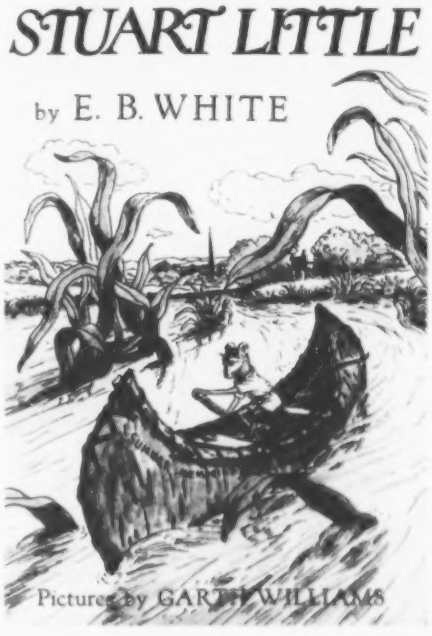
CHILDREN'S CLASSICS

The farm in North Brooklin, Maine, inspired White to write three lyrical, imaginative books for children. Two of these, *Stuart Little* and *Charlotte's*

Web, were immediate successes and have remained classics since they first appeared in print in the middle of this century. White's combination of fantasy and carefully crafted storytelling has enchanted young children (and the parents who read to them) with magical characterizations of animal life. The author, in commenting on his writings for children, once said that "although my stories are imaginary, I like to think there is some truth in them too—truth about the way people and animals feel and think and act."

Stuart Little (1945), the first of White's books for children, tells the adventures of a plucky little mouse who is born to a human family. White started the story for his six-year-old niece. He worked on it off and on for two decades, but by the time he was done, his niece was grown up. *Stuart Little* was followed a few years later by what has been called a contemporary masterpiece, *Charlotte's Web* (1952). This enchanting tale tells the story of a loyal and ingenious spider, Charlotte, who saves her friend, Wilbur the pig, from slaughter. The author himself described this story to a children's literature class as one of "friendship, life, death, salvation." *The Trumpet of the Swan* (1970), was White's last children's book. The fantasy plot revolves around the experiences of a mute trumpeter swan. Although the book achieved moderate success, it lacked, said one reviewer, "the magical essence . . . that infuses Charlotte and Stuart with life."

Until close to the end of his life, White continued to contribute an occasional letter or essay to his local paper and to receive an assignment every week of newsbreak items from *The New Yorker*. In his 80s, his health began to fail noticeably. Beset by a variety of ailments, White died of Alzheimer's disease (the degenerative disorder of the brain that affects function and memory) on October 1, 1985, at his home in Maine. He was 86 years old. *The New Yorker* remembered its master essayist with lavish and justified praise: "[He] left his mark on every page of the magazine, and his presence continues, and will always continue, to be felt. . . . Other



writers took their bearings from him, and learned from him a respect for craft and discipline and the language."

HIS LEGACY

William Shawn, a long-time editor of *The New Yorker,* summarized White's legacy as follows: "E.B. White was a great essayist, a supreme stylist. His literary style was as pure as any in our language. It was singular, colloquial, clear, unforced, thoroughly American, and utterly beautiful. Because of his quiet influence, several generations of this country's writers write better than they might have done. He never wrote a mean or careless sentence. He was impervious to literary, intellectual, and political fashion. He was ageless, and his writing was timeless."

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

White and Angell were married on November 13, 1929. They had one son, Joel McCoun White, who became a naval architect and who now owns and operates a boatyard on the Maine seacoast. Nearby is the 40-acre farm in North Brooklin, where the Whites spent the greater part of their married life. In addition to Joel, there were two other children in the family, both from Katharine's first marriage—Roger Angell and Nancy Angell Stableford. Eventually the Whites enjoyed a host of grandchildren and great-grandchildren, too.

WRITINGS

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Stuart Little, 1945 (filmed for TV, 1966)
Charlotte's Web, 1952 (adapted for animated film, 1972)
The Trumpet of the Swan, 1970

ESSAYS, VERSE, HUMOR

The Lady Is Cold, 1929 (poems)
Is Sex Necessary? 1929 (written with James Thurber)
Ho Hum: Newsbreaks from the New Yorker, 1931 (editor)
Another Ho Hum: More Newsbreaks from the New Yorker, 1932 (editor)
Every Day Is Saturday, 1934
Farewell, My Lovely, 1936 (essay)
The Fox of Peapack and Other Poems, 1938
Quo Vadimus? or The Case for the Bicycle, 1939
A Subtreasury of American Humor, 1941 (anthology with Katharine White)
The Four Freedoms, 1941 (a collaboration with Max Lerner, Rheinhold Niebuhr, and Malcolm Cowley)
One Man's Meat, 1942 (collection)

The Wild Flag: Editorials from the New Yorker on Federal World Government and Other Matters, 1946
Here Is New York, 1949
The Second Tree From the Corner, 1954
The Elements of Style, 1959 (editor; original by William Strunk, Jr.)
The Points of My Compass, 1962 (essays)
Letters of E.B. White, 1976
An E.B. White Reader, 1966
Essays of E.B. White, 1977
Poems and Sketches of E.B. White, 1981
Writings From the New Yorker, 1925-1976, 1990

HONORS AND AWARDS

Page One Award (New York Newspaper Guild): 1954
Lewis Carroll Shelf Award: 1958
Gold Medal Award (National Institute of Arts and Letters): 1960
Presidential Medal of Freedom: 1963
Laura Ingalls Wilder Award (American Library Association): 1970
Recognition of Merit Award (George C. Stone Center for Children's Books): 1970
National Medal for Literature (National Institute of Arts and Letters): 1971
Special Pulitzer Prize: 1978, for full body of work

FURTHER READING

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Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol. 11
Elledge, Scott. *E.B. White: A Biography,* 1984
Encyclopedia of American Humorists, 1988
Encyclopedia Brittanica, 1993
Gherman, Beverly. *E.B. White: Some Writer!* 1992 (juvenile)
Russell, Isabel. *Katharine and E.B. White: An Affectionate Memoir,* 1988
Something about the Author, Vol. 29
Twentieth-Century Children's Writers, 1989
White, E.B. *Letters of E.B. White,* 1976
Who Was Who in America, 1989-1993, Volume X
World Book Encyclopedia, 1992

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Chicago Tribune, Oct. 2, 1985, p.A8
Current Biography 1960; 1985 (obituary)

GQ, Dec. 1990, p.72
Language Arts, Sep. 1986, p. 491
New Yorker, Oct. 14, 1985, p.31; Nov. 25, 1991, p.137; Dec. 27, 1993, p.90
New York Times Biographical Service, Nov. 1976, p.1653; Apr. 1980, p.628; Oct. 1985, p.1177
Newsweek, Oct. 14, 1985, p.79
People, Oct. 14, 1985, p.111
Time, Feb. 13, 1984, p.69; Oct. 14, 1985, p.105
Washington Post, Oct. 2, 1985, p.A25 and p.D1

Paul Zindel 1936-
American Novelist and Dramatist
Author of *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds, The Pigman,* and *Attack of the Killer Fishsticks*

BIRTH

Paul Eugene Zindel was born on May 15, 1936, in the Staten Island Borough of New York City, to Paul Zindel and Beatrice Mary (Frank) Zindel. He had one older sister, Betty.

YOUTH

Zindel had a difficult childhood. His mother and his father, a New York City policeman, separated when Paul was about two years

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old. After that time, he rarely saw his father, except on occasional holidays. His mother was a practical nurse, and she often took care of terminally ill patients in their home. But to make ends meet, she worked in a wide variety of extra jobs as well, at a hot-dog stand, in a shipyard, as a waitress, in real estate, and at a hatcheck booth, among others. At one point she started a dog breeding operation, and soon 26 full-grown collies overran their small house.

Betty Zindel was paranoid. She always believed that someone was out to get her, and she instilled that fear in her children as well. For Paul Zindel, it was a lonely, painful time. "I felt worthless as a child and dared to speak and act my true feelings only in fantasy and secret." That, Zindel has said, had a profound influence in making him a writer.

The family moved often. Paul would barely settle in before his mother would be ready to pack up and move again. Here, Zindel writes of the many different immigrant neighborhoods around Staten Island where his family briefly lived. "Staten Island—a weird place to be born of a Woman Scorned [Zindel's mother] who annually changed residences as though to make certain I would not miss a single square foot of its soil. Staten Island—in my childhood an exotic sampling of other lands: South Beach was Sicily; Stapleton was Killarney; Silver Lake was Alexandria; Tottenville was The Congo. I have not the least doubt I would have emerged staggeringly polylingual if that Woman Scorned had been a mixer. And each town offered a lush, new backdrop: St. George—a buzzing city, hordes rushing on and off the five-cent ferry; Oakwood—a wooded backyard, pheasant families parading beneath hanging fat apples; Travis—a mad tiny airport, weekend pilots in Piper Cubs who circled above their lovers' homes and tossed bottles of Chanel No. 5 [perfume] affixed to midget parachutes. And a mulberry tree. It was a time when Kilbasi [from Poland], pepperoni [from Italy], and knockwurst [from Germany] were the relentless culinary dividers of this little island in New York Bay.

"By the time I was 10 I had gone nowhere but had seen the world."

Because they moved so often, Paul rarely had a chance to make friends before his mother was ready to pick up and move again. He learned to like solitary activities, like making marionettes, carving wooden figures, and watching the creatures in his aquarium and insectarium. "What a great love I had of microcosms, of peering at other worlds framed and separate from me."

EARLY MEMORIES

Once, in response to a question about whether he liked to read as a teenager, Zindel answered, "No. I came from a home that never read books. We had no books in the house. We had no desire to have books

in the house, and I find that kids are very much a product of their homes. That old-fashioned saying is quite true, and so we had no politics. We had no books, no theatre. We had none of those things."

EDUCATION

Zindel bounced around from one school to the next throughout his school career. He even attended four different high schools. When he was 15, he contracted tuberculosis (TB) and was out of school for a year and a half. To recuperate, he was sent to the Stony Wold Sanatorium in Lake Kushaqua in upstate New York. There, he learned to play piano and chess. When he returned to high school, he wrote a play based on his experiences. In it, a pianist recovers from a disease and goes on to play at Carnegie Hall. Entered in a contest sponsored by the American Cancer Society, Zindel's first play won a Parker pen. In 1954, Zindel graduated from Port Richmond High School in Staten Island.

After high school, Zindel attended Wagner College in Staten Island, New York, majoring in chemistry. He also edited the school newspaper and contributed to its literary magazine. In addition, he took a creative writing course by the famed playwright Edward Albee, who became a mentor to him. "He was one of my primary inspirations in writing plays," Zindel later said. "I felt very grateful because he took time." Under Albee's direction, he wrote a play during his final year of college called *Dimensions of Peacocks*. The title was a play on words taken from the medical term "dementia praecox," a psychiatric condition that has nothing whatsoever to do with the subject of the play—Zindel was just fascinated with the term. *Dimensions of Peacocks* is about a misunderstood boy whose domineering mother, a visiting nurse, steals monogrammed linen napkins from her patients by stuffing them down her bra.

In 1958, Zindel graduated from Wagner College with a B.S. degree in chemistry. He was faced with a decision. He felt that he had to choose between his two favorite subjects, writing and science. Instead, he tried to combine the two, taking a job as a technical writer at Allied Chemical. But within only a few months he was bored with that routine job. That's when he decided to return to Wagner College to get his master's in education and become a teacher. The following year, he earned his M.S. degree in education, also from Wagner College.

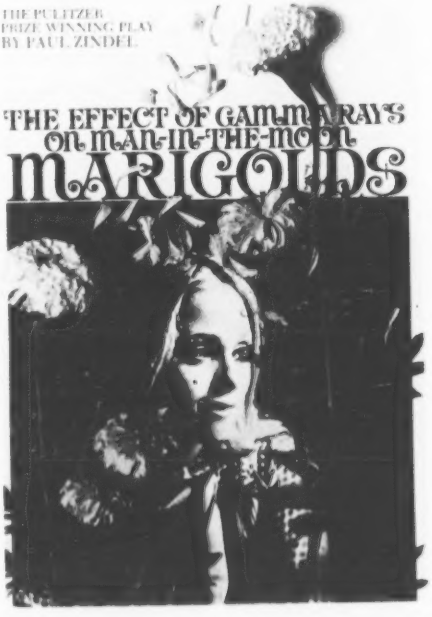
FIRST JOBS

From 1959 to 1969, he taught chemistry and physics at Tottenville High School in Staten Island. Later, his experiences with teenagers, and particularly his willingness to listen, proved invaluable in his writings for young adults. "I would sit in the back of a study hall (which was my work assignment), and some of the kids during those periods would throw

pennies and M & Ms at various teachers; but I found it much easier to let these kids, who were usually the troublemakers in the school, just come up and tell me their problems and their stories, and I never really passed any judgment. They would tell me about abortions they had, or breaking and entering, or funny things like setting off firecrackers in the bathroom or smoke bombs in a movie theatre. Everything seemed to have a demonic quality; but I found it rather inventive, to tell you the truth, and I found the stories honest, and I just never passed judgment on them. It also prevented them from throwing pennies and M & Ms. They like to talk to strangers, to anyone other than their parents, as a rule."

The whole time he was teaching, Zindel also continued to write. Although he later went on to win acclaim as a novelist for young adults, he focused exclusively on drama at this point. He wrote two plays, *Euthanasia and the Endless Hearts* and *A Dream of Swallows*, but neither had any popular or critical success. Then he wrote *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds*, and his career took off.

Zindel wrote *Marigolds* in the summer of 1963, and later sent it on to Houston's Alley Theatre. Although Nina Vance, the theatre director, received many plays from aspiring dramatists, this one caught her eye—just because Zindel had put a bright gold cover on it. She took it home one night, read it, and decided to stage it. In May 1965, the first version of *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds* opened in Houston to mixed reviews. In 1966 the play was produced for television by National Education Television (NET) in New York, again to decidedly mixed reviews. But Nina Vance was still so enthusiastic about the work that she commissioned Zindel's next play. In 1967 he took a year's leave of absence from teaching to work with Vance as the playwright-in-residence at the Alley, where he learned much of the craft of the theatre. By the time he returned to teaching, he felt that he saw a change in his students. They seemed less interested in



learning, and Zindel quickly lost interest in teaching. In 1969, Zindel left teaching for good.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

THE EFFECT OF GAMMA RAYS ON MAN-IN-THE-MOON MARIGOLDS AND OTHER DRAMAS

By that point, Zindel was busy reworking his play. It was staged in several regional theatres before moving to New York. In April 1970, *Marigolds* opened off-Broadway to rave reviews. It is the story of an unusual family: a mother, Beatrice Hunsdorfer, and her two daughters, Ruth and Tillie. Betty the Loon, as the mother is known, is sarcastic, cynical, bitter, verbally abusive, and half-mad. A widow, she is the central character of the play. She takes care of a semi-comatose and dying woman, Nanny. The elder daughter, Ruth, suffers from epileptic seizures, which are often brought on by household events. She has been permanently scarred by her mother. It is only sensitive and gifted Tillie who will escape this madhouse, through her love of science and her experiments with the effect of radiation on marigolds. The play was clearly autobiographical, as Zindel relates here. "*Marigolds* is the kind of story that just sort of pops right out of you, because you've *lived* it. My mother *was* . . . Beatrice. I've exaggerated, of course. It's true that Mother did a lot of the mean things that Beatrice does, but she was also capable of enormous compassion." *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds* won a host of awards, including the 1971 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. "I like trying to arrive at the sublime . . . through mundane common material," Zindel once said in describing his purpose as a dramatist. In *Marigolds* he succeeded.

Zindel has continued to write dramas since that time, including collaborating on adaptations for television and movies. These later works share many characteristics with *Marigolds*. The subjects of his plays often draw heavily on his own earlier experiences, combined with his sometimes grotesque sense of humor. Women are often portrayed as neurotic, lonely, brutal, and bitter, and the families are dysfunctional. All the adults, in general, are both tormented and tormenting. Recurring themes include loneliness, eccentricity, isolation, and escapism. Response to his works has been decidedly mixed. Most reviewers conclude that except for the recent work *Amulets against the Dragon Forces*, Zindel's later plays have not lived up to the promise shown in *Marigolds*.

FICTION FOR TEENS AND YOUNGER READERS

During this time Zindel had also started writing novels for young adults. He got his start in that genre in a rather unusual way. Early on in his

writing career, Zindel firmly considered himself a dramatist writing for adults, and he had no plans to write in any other format. Then in 1966 he received a call from Charlotte Zolotow, a children's book editor for Harper & Row Publishers, that changed his mind. Watching a TV version of *Marigolds,* she had been moved by Zindel's play. His realistic dialogue and depictions of teenagers prompted her to call Zindel and ask him to consider writing for young people. He took a look at the existing literature and agreed. At that point, many books for teenagers were simplistic stories about conventional white American families, where the mom stayed home and baked cookies with her daughters and the dad came home each evening from his office job to play baseball with his sons. Non-traditional families and challenging and difficult social issues were completely ignored. Calling upon his experiences as a high-school teacher, Zindel decided to try writing novels for this young adult audience.

The result was *The Pigman* (1968). This is a story about two high school sophomores, John and Lorraine, and their meeting with a lonely old widower, Mr. Pignati. They call him the Pigman because of the large collection of pigs that he and his beloved wife had amassed. The story is told in alternating chapters by the two students. They befriend Mr. Pignati and then later, when he is ill and in the hospital, they take advantage of that friendship by throwing a wild party in his home. During the party, Mr. Pignati's prized pigs are smashed. When he dies just a few days later, John and Lorraine are left to question their responsibility for his death. Critical response was prompt and overwhelming. Reviewers loved the book, calling it ground breaking for its accurate depiction of adolescent life. They mentioned, in particular, that parents are noticeably absent from this book—it is the teenagers' story, and their parents are relegated to a secondary role.

Since that time, Zindel has written about 20 additional books for young readers. They share many characteristics, with each other and with his dramas as well: sharp dialogue, a realistic approach to problems, unpretentious teen heroes and heroines, the search for personal identity, conflicts between family members, and youthful questioning of parental values. But above all, the adults, particularly any authority figures, are portrayed as irresponsible wretches, while teens are depicted as intelligent, spunky, resourceful, and adventurous.

Reaction to his books has varied widely. Some reviewers have pointed to his formulaic characters and his repetitive plots as weaknesses. And many adults are upset by his cynical attitudes. They object to his emphasis on distressing themes and his negative portrayal of all adults, worrying that his books would corrupt youthful readers. Others reject this viewpoint, interpreting his work as a rejection of this negativity and an affirmation of life. And despite any objections adults may have, Zindel's books have been tremendously popular with teen readers.

Zindel's recent fiction shows a new departure. He has written a lighthearted series called "The Wacky Facts Lunch Bunch," with four novels to date. Unlike his earlier fiction for young adults, this series is written for readers aged 9 to 12. The books feature the adventures of a group of four fifth-grade students who band together and pledge to make their school year "cram full of laughs, good times, and mind-boggling adventures."

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Zindel was married rather late in life, at age 37, to Bonnie Hildebrand, a former publicity director for the Cleveland Playhouse and now a writer. They were married on October 25, 1973. They have two children: David, born in 1974, and Lizabeth, born in 1976. The Zindels lived for a time in Los Angeles, California, but they now make their home in New York.

ADVICE TO YOUNG WRITERS

When asked what advice he could offer to aspiring young writers, Zindel responded as follows: "I think the major advice is not to be discouraged, because . . . I don't see any quick success for young people in writing. I think it requires a certain amount of maturation. I think there's a certain amount of age that's necessary before you learn how to translate your own impulses into more universal terms. How to master the craft of writing fiction? I can't imagine myself as a teenager being able to comprehend some of the needs of structure. I think for young people interested in writing they must simply *do*. They must sit down and write as much as they can about whatever they feel they should. They should know the various types of writing they could do, and they should try all of them. Try the short story, the novel, the drama, the poem, and try to discover which one they feel most comfortable in. They should also explore books on structure as much as possible.

They should take writing courses. They should take creative writing courses in high school. They should sign up for summer courses in creative writing if there's a writers' conference around. They should expose themselves to reading real writers, professional writers. If a kid is in high school and knows that he wants to write and that he enjoys writing, there is no question in my mind that he will become a successful writer."

MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES

Zindel had one high-school English teacher, Miss Burger, who believed in him and helped him to believe in himself. One day, she tried to commit suicide. "Miss Burger was the only one in the school who didn't think I was a misfit. And she was the only high school teacher I had ever heard of who had a doctorate in Shakespearean studies. She was so brilliant, but I was the only one in her class who wasn't bored and didn't throw M & Ms or pennies at her when she read from *Macbeth*. She told me things about myself I'll never forget—the kinds of things that changed my life. Until, finally, she had a nervous breakdown and they took her away. I was there! I saw it! It happened on this day when she was reading a sensitive Shakespearean sonnet, and the M & Ms and pennies were bouncing off her head—BOING! BOING! Until she couldn't stand it any longer. Suddenly, she opened a classroom window and leaped up onto the ledge. Three stories high above a cement handball court! And she said to the class, 'If you don't stop it, I'm going to jump!' That was the first time I learned how much kids like action and suspense, because everyone except me yelled, 'JUMP!' But the Dean of Boys ran in and pulled her off the ledge in time. I really miss her. Miss Burger would even let me stay after school and show her my stories. I'd perform them for her with puppets and marionettes. She'd just sit there smiling at me, encouraging me. I even told her a story in which I had invented a perfect sleeping room—a room that was painted all black with just a mattress—and a boy has fantastical dreams of heaven and death. Miss Burger suggested I shouldn't write too many stories about God and death because she said that usually means a writer is finished. But she said she was certain I had nothing to worry about—that I was filled with Life! Filled! That I had *amulets*! There were amulets, magic shields, in my stories to protect me from demons! That I'd always find a way out! I'd escape! I'd win! She was the only one to tell me I wasn't completely deranged! I was just going to be a writer!"

WRITINGS

DRAMAS

Dimensions of Peacocks, 1959
Euthanasia and the Endless Hearts, 1960

A Dream of Swallows, 1964
The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds, 1965
And Miss Reardon Drinks a Little, 1967
The Secret Affairs of Mildred Wild, 1972
Ladies at the Alamo, 1975
Let Me Hear You Whisper and *The Ladies Should Be in Bed*, 1982
A Destiny with Half Moon Street, 1983
Amulets against the Dragon Forces, 1989

FICTION FOR YOUNG ADULTS (EXCEPT WHERE NOTED)

The Pigman, 1968
My Darling, My Hamburger, 1969
I Never Loved Your Mind, 1970
I Love My Mother, 1975 (juvenile)
Pardon Me, You're Stepping on My Eyeball! 1976
Confessions of a Teenage Baboon, 1977
The Undertaker's Gone Bananas, 1978
A Star for the Latecomer, 1980 (with Bonnie Zindel)
The Pigman's Legacy, 1980
The Girl Who Wanted a Boy, 1981
To Take a Dare, 1982 (with Crescent Dragonwagon)
Henry and Hortense at Hormone High, 1984
When Darkness Falls, 1984 (adult)
The Amazing and Death-Defying Diary of Eugene Dingman, 1987
A Begonia for Miss Applebaum, 1989
The Pigman and Me, 1992 (autobiography)
David and Della, 1993
Loch, 1994

"WACKY FACTS LUNCH BUNCH" SERIES

Attack of the Killer Fishsticks, 1993
Fright Party, 1993
The Fifth Grade Safari, 1993
One Hundred Percent Laugh Riot, 1994

SCREEN PLAYS AND TELEVISION PLAYS

The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds, 1966
Let Me Hear You Whisper, 1974
Up the Sandbox, 1972 (adapted from Anne Roiphe)
Mame, 1973 (adapted from Patric Dennis)
Maria's Lovers, 1985 (with Gerard Brach, Andrei Konchalovsky, and Marjorie David)
Alice in Wonderland, 1985 (adapted from Lewis Carroll)

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Runaway Train, 1986 (with Djordje Milicevic and Edward Bunker)
Babes in Toyland, 1986 (adapted from Victor Herbert)
A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, 1989 (adapted from Mark Twain)

HONORS AND AWARDS

Outstanding Children's Books of the Year (*New York Times Book Review*): 1968, for *The Pigman*; 1969, for *My Darling, My Hamburger*; 1970, for *I Never Loved Your Mind*
Boston Globe—Horn Book Award: 1969, for *The Pigman*
Obie Award (*Village Voice*): 1970, for Best New American Play, for *Marigolds*
New York Drama Critics Circle Award: 1970, for Best American Play, for *Marigolds*
Variety Award: 1970, for most promising playwright
Pulitzer Prize in Drama: 1971, for *Marigolds*
New York Critics Award: 1971, for *Marigolds*
Vernon Rice Drama Desk Award: 1971, for most promising playwright, for *Marigolds*
Notable Book (American Library Association): 1971, for *Marigolds*
Best Books for Young Adults (American Library Association): 1971, for *Marigolds*; 1976, for *Pardon Me, You're Stepping on My Eyeball!*; 1977, for *Confessions of a Teenage Baboon*; 1980, for *The Pigman's Legacy*; 1989, for *A Begonia for Miss Applebaum*
Best of the Best Books for Young Adults (American Library Association): 1960-74, for *The Pigman*; 1970-83, for *Marigolds*

FURTHER READING

BOOKS

Authors and Artist for Young Adults, Vol. 2
Contemporary Authors New Revision Series, Vol. 31
Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vols. 7 and 52
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Gallo, Donald R., ed. *Speaking for Ourselves: Autobiographical Sketches by Notable Authors of Books for Young Adults*, 1990
Something about the Author, Vol. 58
Twentieth-Century Children's Writers, 1989
Zindel, Paul. *The Pigman and Me*, 1992

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Current Biography 1973
English Journal, Oct. 1977, p.20
New York Times, July 16, 1970, Arts and Leisure, p.1

Publisher's Weekly, Dec. 5, 1977, p.6
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22 Chavis, Benjamin (1948)
25 Alley, Kirstie (1955)
28 Gretzky, Wayne (1961)
29 Gilbert, Sara (1975)
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31 Ryan, Nolan (1947)

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1 Spinelli, Jerry (1941)
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3 Nixon, Joan Lowery (1927)
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6 Zmeskal, Kim (1976)
7 Brooks, Garth (1962)
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10 Norman, Greg (1955)
12 Blume, Judy (1938)
15 Groening, Matt (1954)
17 Anderson, Marian (1897)
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18 Morrison, Toni (1931)
20 Barkley, Charles (1963)
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21 Carpenter, Mary Chapin (1958)
24 Jobs, Steven (1955)
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25 Voigt, Cynthia (1942)
28 Andretti, Mario (1940)
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1 Rabin, Yitzhak (1922)
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2 Gorbachev, Mikhail (1931)
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3 Hooper, Geoff (1979)
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10 Guy, Jasmine (1964)
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12 Hamilton, Virginia (1936)
13 Van Meter, Vicki (1982)
15 Ginsburg, Ruth Bader (1933)
16 O'Neal, Shaquille (1972)
17 Nureyev, Rudolf (1938)
18 Blair, Bonnie (1964)
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20 Lee, Spike (1957)
22 Shatner, William (1931)
25 Steinem, Gloria (1934)
26 O'Connor, Sandra Day (1930)
28 James, Cheryl
30 Hammer (1933)
31 Chavez, Cesar (1927)
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2 Carvey, Dana (1955)
4 Angelou, Maya (1928)
5 Powell, Colin (1937)
12 Cleary, Beverly (1916)
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14 Rose, Pete (1941)
19 Hart, Melissa Joan (1976)
28 Baker, James (1930)
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29 Agassi, Andre (1970)
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9 Bergen, Candice (1946)
14 Smith, Emmitt (1969)
15 Zindel, Paul (1936)
17 Paulsen, Gary (1939)
18 John Paul II (1920)
21 Robinson, Mary (1944)
26 Ride, Sally (1951)
27 Kerr, M.E. (1927)

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1 Lalas, Alexi (1970)
4 Kistler, Darci (1964)
5 Scarry, Richard (1919)
6 Rylant, Cynthia (1954)
8 Bush, Barbara (1925)
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11 Cousteau, Jacques (1910)
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12 Bush, George (1924)
13 Allen, Tim (1953)
14 Graf, Steffi (1969)
16 McClintock, Barbara (1902)
17 Gingrich, Newt (1943)
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18 Van Allsburg, Chris (1949)
19 Abdul, Paula (1962)
21 Bhutto, Benazir (1953)
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22 Bradley, Ed (1941)
23 Rudolph, Wilma (1940)
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25 Carle, Eric (1929)
27 Babbitt, Bruce (1938)
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1 Diana, Princess of Wales (1961)
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2 Marshall, Thurgood (1908)

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5 Watterson, Bill (1958)
10 Ashe, Arthur (1943)
11 Cisneros, Henry (1947)
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12 Cosby, Bill (1937)
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13 Stewart, Patrick (1940)
15 Aristide, Jean-Bertrand (1953)
18 Mandela, Nelson (1918)
21 Reno, Janet (1938)
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22 Hinton, S.E. (1948)
24 Krone, Julie (1963)
28 Davis, Jim (1945)
29 Burns, Ken (1953)
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30 Hill, Anita (1956)

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3 Roper, Dee Dee
5 Ewing, Patrick (1962)
9 Houston, Whitney (1963)
11 Haley, Alex (1921)
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12 Martin, Ann M. (1955)
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13 Battle, Kathleen (1948)
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14 Berry, Halle (1967?)
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Larson, Gary (1950)
15 Ellerbee, Linda (1944)
19 Clinton, Bill (1946)
20 Chung, Connie (1946)
22 Schwarzkopf, H. Norman (1934)
23 Novello, Antonia (1944)
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24 Arafat, Yasir (1929)
26 Burke, Christopher (1965)

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26 Culkin, Macaulay (1980)
28 Dove, Rita (1952)
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31 Perlman, Itzhak (1945)

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1 Estefan, Gloria (1958)
5 Guisewite, Cathy (1950)
8 Thomas, Jonathan Taylor (1982)
13 Taylor, Mildred D. (1943)
15 Marino, Dan (1961)
16 Dahl, Roald (1916)
18 de Mille, Agnes (1905)
21 Fielder, Cecil (1963)
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24 Ochoa, Severo (1905)
25 Locklear, Heather (1961)
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27 Handford, Martin (1956)

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1 Carter, Jimmy (1924)
3 Herriot, James (1916)
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5 Lemieux, Mario (1965)
7 Ma, Yo-Yo (1955)
8 Stine, R.L. (1943)
11 Perry, Luke (1964?)
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12 Childress, Alice (1920?)
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13 Kerrigan, Nancy (1969)
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15 Iacocca, Lee A. (1924)
17 Jemison, Mae (1956)
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26 Clinton, Hillary Rodham (1947)
27 Anderson, Terry (1947)
28 Gates, Bill (1955)
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29 Ryder, Winona (1971)
31 Candy, John (1950)
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2 lang, k.d. (1961)
3 Arnold, Roseanne (1952)
9 Denton, Sandi
11 Vonnegut, Kurt (1922)
12 Andrews, Ned (1980)
Harding, Tonya (1970)
13 Goldberg, Whoopi (1949)
14 Boutros-Ghali, Boutros (1922)
16 Baiul, Oksana (1977)
17 Fuentes, Daisy (1966)
18 Mankiller, Wilma (1945)
21 Aikman, Troy (1966)
25 Grant, Amy (1960)
Thomas, Lewis (1913)
26 Pine, Elizabeth Michele (1975)
29 L'Engle, Madeleine (1918)
30 Jackson, Bo (1962)

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3 Filipovic, Zlata (1980)
7 Bird, Larry (1956)
12 Bialik, Mayim (1975)
13 Fedorov, Sergi (1969)
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23 Avi (1937)
27 Roberts, Cokie (1943)
28 Washington, Denzel (1954)

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Valerie Bertinelli
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Cher
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Jamie Lee Curtis
Ted Danson
Tommy Davidson
Geena Davis
Matt Dillon
Michael Douglas
Larry Fishburne
Harrison Ford
Jody Foster
Michael J. Fox
Richard Gere
Tracey Gold
Melanie Griffith
Tom Hanks
Mark Harmon
Michael Keaton
Val Kilmer
Angela Lansbury
Christopher Lloyd
Marlee Matlin
Bette Midler
Alyssa Milano
Demi Moore
Rick Moranis
Eddie Murphy
Bill Murray
Leonard Nimoy
Ashley Olsen
Mary Kate Olsen
Sean Penn
Phylicia Rashad
Keanu Reeves
Julia Roberts
Bob Saget
Fred Savage
Arnold Schwarzenegger
Christian Slater
Jimmy Smits
Sylvester Stallone
John Travolta
Damon Wayans
Bruce Willis
B.D. Wong

Artists
Mitsumasa Anno
Graeme Base
Maya Ying Lin

Astronauts
Neil Armstrong

Authors
Jean M. Auel
Lynn Banks
Gwendolyn Brooks
John Christopher
Arthur C. Clarke
John Colville
Paula Danziger
Paula Fox
Jamie Gilson
Rosa Guy
Nat Hentoff
Norma Klein
E.L. Konigsburg
Lois Lowry
David Macaulay
Stephen Manes
Norma Fox Mazer
Anne McCaffrey
Gloria D. Miklowitz
Marsha Norman
Robert O'Brien
Francine Pascal
Christopher Pike
Daniel Pinkwater
Ann Rice
Louis Sachar
Carl Sagan
J.D. Salinger
John Saul
Maurice Sendak
Shel Silverstein
Amy Tan
Alice Walker
Jane Yolen
Roger Zelazny

Business
Minoru Arakawa
Michael Eisner
William Ford, Jr.
Anita Roddick
Donald Trump
Ted Turner
Lillian Vernon

Cartoonists
Lynda Barry
Roz Chast
Greg Evans
Nicole Hollander
Charles Schulz
Art Spiegelman
Garry Trudeau

Comedians
Dan Aykroyd
Steve Martin
Eddie Murphy
Bill Murray

Dancers
Debbie Allen
Mikhail Baryshnikov
Suzanne Farrell
Gregory Hines
Gelsey Kirkland
Twyla Tharp
Tommy Tune

Directors/ Producers
Woody Allen
Steven Bocho
Francis Ford Coppola
John Hughes
George Lucas
Penny Marshall
Leonard Nimoy
Rob Reiner
John Singleton

Environmentalists/ Animal Rights
Marjory Stoneman Douglas
Kathryn Fuller
Lois Gibbs
Wangari Maathai
Linda Maraniss
Ingrid Newkirk
Pat Potter

Journalists
Tom Brokaw
Dan Rather
Nina Totenberg
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Musicians
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Joshua Bell
George Benson
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Edie Brickell
James Brown
C & C Music Factory
Mariah Carey
Ray Charles
Chayanne
Natalie Cole
Cowboy Junkies
Billy Ray Cyrus
Def Leppard
Gerardo
Guns N' Roses
Ice Cube
India
Janet Jackson
Jermaine Jackson
Kitaro
Kris Kross
KRS-One
Andrew Lloyd Webber
Courtney Love
Madonna
Barbara Mandrell
Marky Mark
Branford Marsalis
Paul McCartney
Midori
N.W.A.
Sinead O'Connor
Teddy Pendergrass
Prince
Public Enemy
Raffi
Bonnie Raitt
Red Hot Chili Peppers
Lou Reed
R.E.M.
Kenny Rogers
Axl Rose
Run-D.M.C.
Carly Simon
Paul Simon
Michelle Shocked
Sting
TLC
Randy Travis
2 Live Crew
Vanilla Ice
Stevie Wonder

People to Appear in Future Issues

Politics/ World Leaders
Les Aspin
Jesse Brown
Ronald Brown
Pat Buchanan
Violeta Barrios de Chamorro
Shirley Chisolm
Jean Chretien
Warren Christopher
Edith Cresson
Mario Cuomo
Robert Dole
Mike Espy
Louis Farrakhan
Alan Greenspan
Vaclav Havel
Jesse Jackson
Jack Kemp
Bob Kerrey
Coretta Scott King
John Major
Imelda Marcos
Slobodan Milosevic
Brian Mulroney
Manuel Noriega
Hazel O'Leary
Major Owens
Leon Panetta
Federico Pena
Robert Reich
Ann Richards
Richard Riley
Phyllis Schlafly
Pat Schroeder
Aung San Suu Kyi
Donna Shalala
Desmond Tutu
Lech Walesa

Royalty
Charles, Prince of Wales
Duchess of York (Sarah Ferguson)
Queen Noor

Scientists
Sallie Baliunas
Avis Cohen
Donna Cox
Stephen Jay Gould
Mimi Koehl
Deborah Letourneau
Philippa Marrack
Helen Quinn
Carl Sagan
Barbara Smuts
Flossie Wong-Staal
Aslihan Yener
Adrienne Zihlman

Sports
Jim Abbott
Muhammad Ali
Sparky Anderson
Michael Andretti
Boris Becker
Bobby Bonilla
Jose Canseco
Jennifer Capriati
Michael Chang
Roger Clemens
Randall Cunningham
Eric Davis
Clyde Drexler
John Elway
Chris Evert
George Foreman
Zina Garrison
Florence Griffith-Joyner
Rickey Henderson
Evander Holyfield
Desmond Howard
Brett Hull
Raghib Ismail
Jim Kelly
Petr Klima
Bernie Kozar
Greg LeMond
Carl Lewis
Mickey Mantle
Willy Mays
Paul Molitor
Jack Nicklaus
Joe Paterno
Kirby Puckett
Mark Rippien
David Robinson
John Salley
Barry Sanders
Monica Seles
Daryl Strawberry
Danny Sullivan
Vinnie Testaverde
Isiah Thomas
Mike Tyson
Steve Yzerman

Television Personalities
Downtown Julie Brown
Andre Brown (Dr. Dre)
Phil Donahue
Arsenio Hall
Joan Lunden
Dennis Miller
Jane Pratt
Martha Quinn
Diane Sawyer

Other
Madeleine Albright
James Brady
Johnnetta Cole
Jaimie Escalante
Jack Kevorkian
Wendy Kopp
Sister Irene Kraus
Mother Theresa
Eli Weisel
Jeanne White

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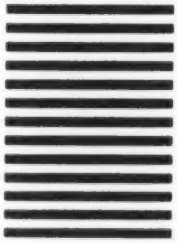

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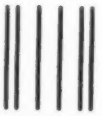

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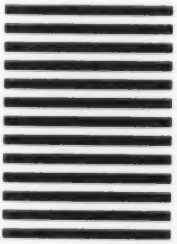

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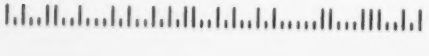

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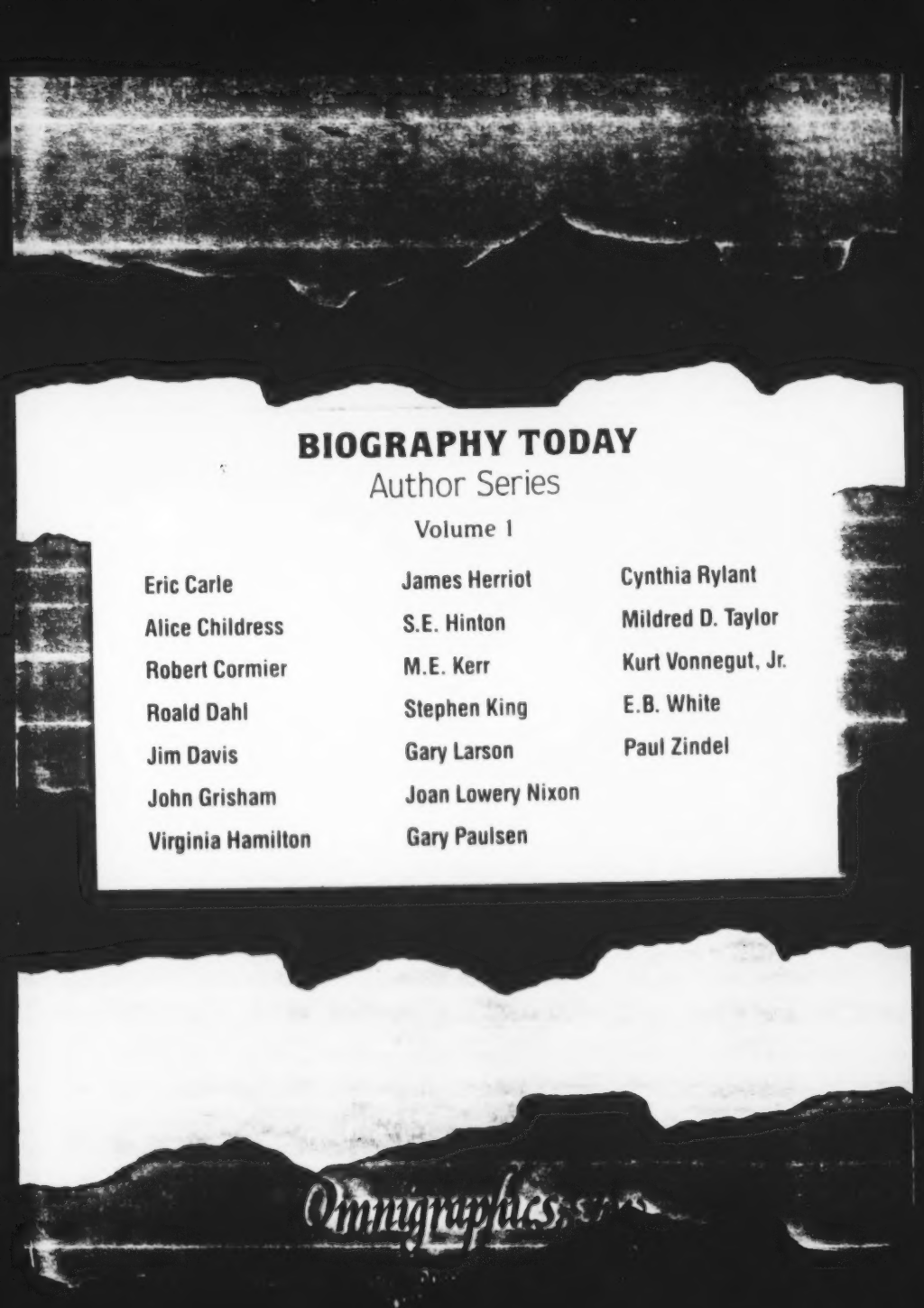

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